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The Author.

J. G. Jennings.

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OF
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MASQUE
OF
THE THREE LOVES

BY

J. G. JENNINGS.

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TO

MY DEAR WIFE

MAUD WALROND JENNINGS:

ALLAHABAD, *April* 1900.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

STEPHAN, *a young probationer of the Celibate Order.*

CHIEF PRIEST, *Head of the Celibate Order, and guardian of Stephan.*

THEODORE, *father of Dione, Eirene, and Dorothea.*

ALEXIS, *husband of Dione.*

EIRENE, *a young maiden, daughter of Theodore.*

DIONE, *elder sister of Eirene, married to Alexis.*

DOROTHEA, *younger sister of Eirene.*

LAODAMAS, *the little son of Dione and Alexis.*

CHORUS OF SINGERS *in the Temple.*

CHORUS OF WOMEN.

CHORUS OF CHILDREN.

CHORUS OF MEN, *attired as hunters.*

BAND OF TEMPLE-WOMEN.

Priest, Temple-attendants, Workmen, Soldiers, Maidens, Children, Hunters, Citizens, Prioress, Nun, and others.

MASQUE

OF

THE THREE LOVES.

"In the Phæacian ships are no helmsmen or oarage, such as other ships have; but they themselves perceive the thoughts and goal of the voyagers, and know the cities and fertile shores of all peoples, and dart forth swiftly over the gulfs of the brine, invisible in mist and cloud."—Odyssey, VIII, 557—562.

ACT I, Scene i.

Scene: *a part of the Great Temple in a city; the Chapel of the Loving Spirit. A square marble altar stands in the middle. Through open arches to the North (the back of the scene) appears a stone terrace; beyond this lie the Temple-gardens; and between*

trees is seen a distant view of snow-capped mountains. Through arches on the East (left) side of the Chapel a glimpse of the Chief Altar and of the Choir is shown. The plan of the Temple resembles that of a Basilica: the Chapel is situated in the North-West corner of the building. TIME: *early afternoon.*

[EIRENE *is discovered kneeling in prayer. Enter* TEMPLE-ATTENDANTS *and* ACOLYTES *carrying a brazier of burning charcoal, a vessel filled with fragrant herbs, baskets of fruits and flowers, and a pitcher of water.*

1ST ATTENDANT (*to* ACOLYTE).

There is order and fitting ceremony
In all things, even in the carrying in
Of water to the altar when the priest's
Eye is not on the water-bearer. If, boy,
You think the holy Temple is fit place
For lax behaviour and for the spilling
Of water through indifference to your office
(Which, though it may be humble, is yet connected

With holy things, and so needs zeal and reverence
In the performer), you will find the Temple
Can well spare to the shop your lordly presence
And possibly superior attainments.
Pride in the fair performance of one's office,
However lowly, is a prime rule of life.
And how much more is such pride necessary
Here where the service is directly (as all
Services are, in the beginning or
The end, directly or indirectly, given—
But here directly) given to Heaven!

2ND ATTENDANT.

Good counsel
For young and old! And think no shame, my lad,
To learn, but shame to be ashamed to amend.
An obstinate heart in wrong is the old brute
Reborn into a human family,
The very reddest cause of blushes, boy.

1ST ATTENDANT.

Let him walk first, away from the temptation
To play the hero to the others.

2ND ATTENDANT.

Ay! [*They go out.*

CHORAL SONG (*sung by unseen choir*).

An inner voice to me declares
The law which heavenly heralds blow,
Through golden tubes, from lofty stairs,
The cloudy throne of God below.

When loud the herald tubes proclaim,
And sweet and clear, His heavenly will,
The angels, robed in tongued flame,
Bow down in ranks; all heaven is still.

Awhile they bow, and softly rise,
Like yellow corn beneath the wind,
When o'er the waving harvest flies
The breeze, and ripples course behind.

The winds of Heaven upon me blow,
Though here I lie in distant vale,
And fainter here the breeze may flow,
And stubborn weed may meet the gale.

Yet here a voice to me declares
The law proclaimed in heavenly notes,
Through golden tubes, from lofty stairs,
Where o'er stilled heaven far music floats.

EIRENE (*to self*).

The love of which all tell may I not know?
Ah me, this restlessness of body and
Of spirit! Surely were love as a deep sea
Of calm delight; deep to the very basis
Of life; 'mid wonders that have been half-terrors,
Perhaps, to far anticipation, but,
Nearly beheld, are the deep peace of the heart,
That is both soul and body.

[*A party of* WORKMEN *enters, moving towards the Choir.*

1ST WORKMAN.

The pleasantest shelter in the whole city,
Hail, rain, or shine! I reckon it worth a shilling
A day to have work near the Temple. Lesser
Churches are not to my mind, since I've had
This job. Give me the Temple on a sunny

Noon like this, an after-dinner feeling
Of thankfulness and satisfaction, and half
An hour left out of the meal-hour, and I
Envy no man. Five minutes here inside,
In the shade, where one can see the dim carved altar,
With the great light pouring above it in
A slant, downwards into the midst of the choir;
The choristers half hidden on either side
In shadows, piping like groves of nightingales—
These make one feel the presence of a Spirit
To whom a natural thankfulness is due.
I go out into the Temple-gardens then
The happier, and, as I trust, the better;
And among the flower-beds, on the green grass
Spread in the sun, or underneath the trees,
Can rest and think over the past, and of
The lessening future for me, without fear.
We of these parts have much to thank Heaven for.

2ND WORKMAN.

Ay, ay! This is the best part of a good
City, where every honest working-man
Can have his say—and no-one, thank God, listens

To him unless he says what every one
Else is saying ; so he is pleased, and none
The worse. Oh, it's a good country. None better !

3RD WORKMAN.

Ay ! and provision for a man's old age
Out of the land ! I'm, like you, getting old,
And my sons are thinking more of their women
Than of the old father. But they'll not forget him
Entirely, and there'll be many a little comfort
For the old man yet, besides the bite I've worked for
And earned. Ay, a good country ! There's many worse.

1ST WORKMAN.

Worse ? Some are poor men's purgatories, I hear.

[*They go out, towards the Choir.*

CHORAL SONG (*sung by unseen choir*).

A spirit breathes in every star,
Chanting the still night through ;
A spirit checks the arcs afar
They, hid by day, pursue ;
One spirit breathes the stars among,
Like thread through precious jewels strung.

The stars a guiding hand obey,
Chanting their quiet hymn ;
The suns that whirl through blazing day,
And earths half-bright, half-dim.
All circle pendent, and between
The Spirit is, that e'er has been.

All things that live, live by one breath,
One life in all heaven's orbs ;
And dying re-unite in death,
One spirit all absorbs.
Surrounding Life ! Encircling Peace !
Thy closing arms are death's release.

One spirit lifts each human breast,
The Spirit sole, divine ;
And, oh, God's love and Heaven's deep rest
In human mirrors shine.
Led by the vision in loved eyes
Men may remember paradise.

EIRENE (*to self*).

Heaven has high part in love. O love imagined !
Whose eyes shall steal soft through the gates of mine,
Down the long intricate ways that guard the soul,

Into the very grove, and temple, and shrine
Of this my being, to breathe its heavy incense,
The filmy column rising undisturbed
In air, with silent coils of sacrificial
Smoke, up to the dim roof (where priest and priestess
Raptly shall gaze in silence and alone,
They only left of a whole world of shadows,
Swift dreams, that once seemed solid men and women);
O love imagined, mine own destined one!
Heaven has such part in love as sanctifies
Thy touch and breath, and this my answering hand.
Ah, mingled skein of love! Of white, of red,
Are thy entangled silken threads; and I
Immeshed—hands, arms, and aching breast. O Love!
Come! Thou shalt be to me, belovèd, more
Than the ideal of form, of limb, of strength,
And smooth white columned grace, and bright wide eyes.
King thou shalt be, and king of all my being;
And of my soul. From thy imperial frontlet
Shall blaze, not the sole daring that enslaves
The savage beasts (and, oh, makes slaves of women!),
But that calm light which is the crown of thy
Divinity, belovèd. For divine

Art thou, the very issue of the Godhead,
Kissed by Him to a second, to a more
Fervent birth of His spirit, of Whom all things
Are near or far, manifestations.
Me too shall heaven's high Ruler bless, through thee,
Drawing me to the lovelier womanhood
That knows heaven, and is heaven's. Thou art my soul's
Love. Thou shalt be that part of heaven that I
May know before heaven is attained again
In whole; and thou must find in me thy portion
Of paradise—our souls two angels, not
Banished, but serving Heaven abroad, and greeting
Each other's high familiar accents with
Immediate rapture, all suffusing, all
Sufficing, and enduring up to and into
The heavens regained.

[*The* TEMPLE-ATTENDANTS *and* ACOLYTES *return from the altar.*

1ST ATTENDANT.

Praise be to those that guide the church and state
For the ample revenues of this great Temple!
Niggardliness in worship I hate as much
As wastefulness; and it would cut me to

The heart if for the want of due provision
We had, here, to stint a single decency
In the way of prayer, or sacrifice, or song;
Must ponder it for half a year before
This or that little loveliness might be
Added, to adorn some part of our service.
Praise be to those who guide the church and state,
And part the intake of the broad tilled lands
Of this wide kingdom equably among
The kingdom's several needs! Ay, it would grieve me
To the heart's core that the great Temple here
Should bring to Heaven a scurvy worship, begot
By the leakings of a niggard treasury
On a starved gratitude, whose breasts run dry.
Gold and silver I do not value, but
Fair form and gracious sound are body to
Worship, wherein the soul of it abides.

2ND ATTENDANT.

Fair form and sound indeed afford the body,
Fittingly beautiful, to worship; and
The emotions in the heart are worship's soul.

1ST ATTENDANT.

Have you yet heard our newest choral song,

The last addition to the Evening Hymns,
Written by the young novice, Master Stephan ?

[*They go out, speaking.*

CHORAL SONG (*sung by unseen choir*).

Turn thou from earth away
True Love to know.
Wing to the sky above,
The chamber of true Love ;
Breathe there a clearer day—
Who Love would know.
Here earthly passions choke
The flame of Love.
Its fragrant food must be
The lover's purity.
Lusts quench with burning smoke
The lamp of Love.
Peace to the quiet heart
Is Love divine ;
Sweet rest in still delight,
Calm day and guarded night ;
Thou, that my solace art,
O Love divine !

Heaven lies in every breast,
True Love's own fane.
In every heart there lies
A pilèd sacrifice,
An altar over-pressed;
In true Love's fane.
Bring then the brazier near,
Love's glowing flame.
Lay here the burning coal,
That up the smoke may roll.
Ah, let the priest appear,
And light the flame!
All lives are drawn from one,
The Love divine.
All spirits are but Thee;
All love, their unity
With Thee, their bliss reuon,
O Love Divine!

EIRENE (*to self, rising*).

Ah me! Life without human love and longing
Were very pure, and very calm—to live
For ever like yon Snows above our town,

Blushing the rosy flush of sentient beauty
But in the eyes of the beholders, not
From their own calm and virginal hearts. O Maids!
O Virgin Mountains! and most alluring types
To a maid of that diviner life—of love
(For still is love the pulsing of all lives;
The beauty of all worlds a spirit of love;
Yea, all divinity but Love; and love
Is in all good, where'er the breath of Heaven
Still blows upon the forehead of the soul)—
O terrible Virgins! heaven in your eyes
Beholds itself im-mirrored. Not cold, then,
Nor come of atrophied senses, is this
Love-life of yours, O Maids! Nay, 'tis *my* love
Transformed, transfigured, and ennobled.—As
I long—yea, for the richness of the body
(Like Earth, for fruit to garner-in, and fill
The ready chambers of her motherhood);
So, with the partial, maimed divinity,
That, trembling, flutters little flights within
My limited heart, I crave his larger soul,
Whose touch shall soothe my trembling, whose caress
Shall smooth the little injured wings, and breathe

Into my heart his own great spirit of hope.
I need thy courage, dear consoling one
To be! high heart! my bosom's god! (And yet,
Thou too, belovèd, knowest by what a vasty
Soaring thy loftiest wings are over-towered—
Nearer to me thereby, and seeing thus,
Thus only, the lowly flight of thy belovèd.)
Not for such bodily or soul-needs ye crave,
Queen Maids, but for the very fulness of,
The white core of the blazing radiance of,
That absolute godhead, which blinds my woman-eyes.
All things are of the godhead, and your spirits,
Sharing more largely in that gift, can draw
(Without the terror overwhelming love,
Without the doubt that needs the clasp of hands,
The mirroring eyes, the lips that seal up sighs)
Near to the Spirit of the World, the Soul
Of souls, the quintessential Joy that moves
All things to happiness—but happiness
How faint beside its own deep ecstasy!
This sharèd ecstasy to ye, O Virgins!
To me, lesser, grant the warm lesser joys;
The kiss of children, the strong arms of him

In whom I trust.

[*She kneels again. The party of* WORKMEN *returns.*

1ST WORKMAN.

Very peaceful and quiet, isn't it, mates!
I go back to my job the fresher for it.
I grudge no mate of mine his full hour's rest
Of a midday, and I hope none grudges mine.
It's economically a saving, and
The work improves by it, and profits grow;
So all benefit.

2ND WORKMAN.

Ay! the labourer
Deserves his rest. And we chaps get it. We're
Well-off in that respect, take the whole year;
And yet our shares in the profits as big as—bigger
Than—any I know.

3RD WORKMAN.

Well, come on then and get
A little sunlight and open air before work.

[*They go out. A* PROCESSION OF ACOLYTES *and*

PRIESTS *enters from the open air followed at a short distance by* STEPHAN, *attired as a probationer of the Celibate Order. The* PROCESSION *moves towards the Choir.*

PROCESSIONAL HYMN (*sung by* ACOLYTES *and* PRIESTS).

Spring returning, God is shown,
Everywhere;
In the fields, the streams, the air.
Come the spring, and God is known;
Everywhere.

Hark! the wheeling hours, in flight,
High declare,
As through summer days they fare—
Dawn, and noon, and evening light—
God is there!

Come the night—ah, bow the knee!
God is there.

Lo, heaven's very throne is bare.
All the stars proclaim, as we,
God is here!

[*The* PROCESSION *goes out.*

STEPHAN (*to self*).

Six months of trial—and I reel and sway,
I totter the more feebly in resolve,
By each day's struggle that I make towards heaven.

EIRENE (*to self*).

Ah, send me love, dear Spirit!

STEPHAN (*to self*).

Oh, ere that fatal passion seize my soul
Grant me to wear the armour of defence,
The shield, the corslet, and the gleaming sword!
Grant me to fall no ambushed wayfarer,
No ignoble traveller taken unawares,
No thief falling into the hands of thieves,
'Mid laughter and broad oaths, to pay his footing!
But (if this passion be an ambushed snare),
Grant me, O Heaven, to fight my fight in arms!
Give me the shield—the mirrored understanding;
The close-linked corslet—of the pure in heart;
The flaming sword—the blazing indignation,
With which the spirit rises to the struggle!
Grant, me thy arms, that I may fight my fight;
Not tamely unawares to find my hands,

My arms, my body, all my sentient frame,
Bound ere I know that I am fastened on!—
Lighten my understanding, O bright Heavens,
Shine in the petty caverns of my soul,
And if (within its darkened involutions)
Causeless timidities, and ignorant fears,
Blind offspring of the night and of the past,
Cling to the dampness of its still decay,
Scare with the heavenly light of the freed mind
The bats and spirits of the dark away!
Old lore and a distrust of thee, O Heaven,
Brush, on their unseen motions through the soul,
Their clammy plumage near the startled skin—
And the dark chamber fills with roar of streams
Awash at foot of fancied precipices.

EIRENE (*to self*).

True love is peace. It shall enfold thee, love.

STEPHAN (*to self*).

Let me not, then, distrust thee, Heaven, if thou
Offer me joys to make the budded life
Bloom and become the regal span and circuit
Of the large soul—the cooling shade, the spot

For resting to the wearied, in whose column
There is immortal strength, and in whose streams,
Winding and rippling through the darkened green,
Is long refreshment ! Yea, yea ! Let me not,
Fearing thy snares, distrust thee and refuse
The gift, through which the eager spirit may grow
Beyond the narrow scope of its own limits !

EIRENE (*to self, rising*).

Heaven's joy on earth love may anticipate.

STEPHAN (*to self*).

Oh, grant me light ! And, Heaven, forsake me not
(I who would serve thee), if I grasp at love !

[*He follows the* PROCESSION *and passes* EIRENE ; *they gaze at each other. He goes out.*

PRIEST'S VOICE (*heard from the Choir*).

The Spirit be in you—before whose presence,
Both here and in all places, both now and at
All times, we do abide !

[EIRENE *kneels again.*

Lo, this (if any

Special abode may be assigned to one
Who is—although unseen, unfelt, unloved—
Present to all), this, is His holy house,
Specially raised by men, where we may know
His Spirit—equally loving, equally touching,
Equally visible to the eyes of faith
(Had we but faith) everywhere, at all times.
Yet, though at all times He be near, at every
Point of all sentience, so that if the hand
Be raised it will encounter Him, and if
The eye do see 'tis through the vision of Him,
And if the hand be still it rests in Him,
And if the eye do close it sleeps in Him,
So that the very breath doth draw Him in
And yet reacting breathes Him not away;
Still, as the presence is wider than the self,
The vision broader than the eye that sees,
So has His spirit an abiding place,
Though made not, as this temple, by man's hands.
As a King's soul illumes his palace-chamber,
So Heaven illumes its palace, this our world;
Present to all, yet with a poised hand
Lighting on this or that, and with a heart

To which some are pressed nearer than are all.
God is before all things, and all things are
Within His royal presence. All things are
But emanations of His scheming brain,
His breath congealed, of most ethereal atoms,
To take the hues and postures of the worlds—
Clouds of the sky, to pass in falling rain.
There His abode, beyond material things,
Yet all things in His view; and man, like blindest
Minutest particle, upon a parasite
Of a fly's wing, dreams not of gazing king,
Nor of the wonder of his voyaging world,
Although the king may breathe upon the sails.
The Spirit be active in you! of whom all forms
Of living things within His worlds are, though
Imperfect incarnations, yet astir
With His sole breath, whose lips gave to the worlds
Their lives (that still are His), their pulse, that still
Throbs with no new engendered force, but with
The first all-rapturous impulse, being divine
Unforfeitably. His Spirit be with you,
And stir in you, and glow to active godhead,
A sacrifice of streaming, deathless flame!

EIRENE (*to self*).

O Love! True love is the divine within us
Drawn to the share of Heaven enclosed within
The girdling precincts of the loved one's soul.
Ah, open, Love! ah, open! let me in!

SERVICE HYMN (*sung by unseen choir*).

Peace is His!
Peace is His, although the worlds may rage;
Though life in war be swayed from youth
to age.
Grant us His peace to share,
Whose peace the heavens declare,
Oh, grant us peace, for peace is His!

Peace is His!
Though now our troubled hearts His peace
but guess,
Whose mortal needs our heavenly souls
depress.
Yet tender visions still,
Dim dreams, our memories fill,
Of earlier peace—our peace in His!

Peace is His;
And will be ours again, and God regained,
Who weeping leaves souls that the world has stained.
Oh, could the spirit renew
Its first untainted hue,
Then were the peace in us as His!

Peace is His!
And ours no peace, for all the sins intrude,
And there, where God abode, are ruins strewed!
Ah, Heaven must build again
The shrine, and purge the stain,
Before our peace return, and His!

PRIEST'S VOICE (*heard from the Choir*).

As the light of the suns abides within
The universe, surging in endless waves
Upon the shores of all the island-worlds,
Ceaselessly urged, all days, and the long nights
(By night as day, for in the suns succeeds
No darkness), e'en so doth God abide between
Our severed lives, His light their ocean stream,

A spirit surging by in endless motion,
Steeping all bodies and the islanded soul.
Yet is the seat of light the burning flame,
And brightness streams from out each central sun;
And God is rayed from the far bliss of heaven.

[*The* PRIEST'S *voice dies away as he moves towards a more distant part of the Choir.*

EIRENE (*to self, rising*).

Heaven draweth near in love, for love is peace.
But, oh, this yearning of my soul is war—
The struggle of the blazing God within
Against the cold indifference of the world.
Ah, little lamp, that wouldst expire, unfed,
When shalt thou fall within the approaching flame,
That finds in all things fire, God everywhere?

[*A party of* SOLDIERS *and* YOUNG WOMEN *has entered. A young soldier from amongst them draws one of the young women aside.*

SOLDIER.

Come, ask her, Sophy. Thou hast a heart as fresh

And tender as spring-weather, that leads mates
Into each other's arms, and kisses both.

YOUNG WOMAN.

Nay, nay, ask for thyself. Do thine own wooing,
As every girl would have thee. Dost thou think
The peacock mates by intermediary—
Too modest, forsooth, to spread his own bright tail?

SOLDIER.

Nay, Sophy, but a pretty singing bird
Like thee might whistle some few notes to lure
The stranger. Then, if once she will give ear,
I'll sing my own best songs, such as they are.

YOUNG WOMAN.

Oh, well, here's a note or two for thee. But
She is not of the sort that harkens to crowing.
This is the wild bird, very shy, except
To her own kind. She is not of our farmyard.

[EIRENE *goes out.*

(*Calls:*) Pretty maiden!

Ah, pretty bird, goodbye !
See, she has flown.

2ND SOLDIER.

Where was thy salt,
My lad, to put upon thy fine bird's tail ?
There is no such salt in any soldier's sweaty
Pocket, my lad : it's salt that's grain of gold.
Give me sweet Sophy here, that comes for love
To make a poor lad's rough lot smooth again—
Nay, Sophy, lass, no blushes ! for thou dost.
Gratitude, and the bairns' keep is all the
Payment that Sophy either sees or wants.

YOUNG WOMAN.

She too would fly for love to one of her
Own kind. Each to its own ! She needs no dust
Of gold, sweet bird ! And what a dear bright eye !

1ST SOLDIER.

Well, like to like ! Yet had I been a prince
I couldn't have meant her fairer.

2ND YOUNG WOMAN.

Oh, such beauties
(Sensitive like a flower, all delicate nerves,

That feel the blowing wind of heaven too raw,
The sun of high mid-day too overdone,
The rain too sodden, and the hail too hard)—
These delicacies don't thrive on common food
And hard knocks, that are what we girls grow strong on.

3RD YOUNG WOMAN.

And small blame to them, I say, if they do
Keep themselves to themselves—I do the same.
There's no soldier ever shall persuade me,
Not in the whole wide world—not from the ranks.

2ND SOLDIER.

You leave the officers a chance then, lass?

3RD YOUNG WOMAN.

How many wives have you had already?
You too? How many children? They're all right,
Sweet souls; the regiment cuts you half your pay
For them (enough to keep one bairn by rights),
And that fine uniform does the rest. But wives—
They take their chances.

[*Enter* DIONE, *leading her little son,* LAODAMAS, *and* DOROTHEA; *the child bearing flowers.*

DOROTHEA.

I cannot see her ; and yet she said that we
Should find her here.

DIONE.

Where can she be ? Ah, yonder !

[DIONE, LAODAMAS *and* DOROTHEA *go out.*

3RD YOUNG WOMAN.

Oh, one or two !
Less than another poor man's wife might get.
But it's a chance. A soldier's wife must take
Her chance.

2ND SOLDIER.

Thank God for that ! We want no wives
That think the chances out beforehand—eh, lads !

3RD YOUNG WOMAN.

Get what you can and welcome ! I keep myself
To myself.

3RD SOLDIER.

Yet thy father was a soldier.

I didn't know the Homes brought up fine ladies.

3RD YOUNG WOMAN.

Then live and learn! At least they bring up girls
That know their value, and how to hold you off.
Half of your marriages are never witnessed.
It's not worth proving you're a soldier's wife.
Half of you men are haled into the army
Because of what you've had and couldn't pay for.

1ST YOUNG WOMAN.

Oh, come along, instead of quarrelling!

2ND SOLDIER.

Ay, Sophy's right, as usual. She's the girl!
Come on, lass, though thy tongue were a flaming sword!
Which it is not, though sharper than thy face.
A right-down pretty maid was spoilt in thee.

[*They go out, towards the Choir.* EIRENE *peeps from behind a pillar, and then runs with flowers to the shrine. After her come* DIONE, *leading* LAODAMAS, *and* DOROTHEA.

EIRENE.

So sweet, so sweet ! I could not help but risk
Bringing you to my shrine. Lie there—and there !

DIONE.

Come, Eirenè, hasten !

DOROTHEA.

Come, sweet Eirenè.

LAODAMAS (*lisping*).

I want my pretty flowers again.

DIONE.

Oh, fie !

DOROTHEA.

I thought you were our little page and bore them
For Mother, and for me, and sweet Eirenè.

EIRENE (*running*).

I come, I come !

[*She picks the child up.*

My very treasure !

[*They go out, the child laughing aloud.*

CURTAIN.

ACT I, Scene ii.

Scene: *the Chapel as before.* Time: *later, the close of the afternoon Service, drawing towards evening.*

[*A* Procession of Priests *and* Acolytes *crosses, returning from the Choir.*

Processional Hymn.

Spring returning, flowers renew,
Everywhere,
Beauty that no earth could bear,
Did not, in each blossomed hue,
God appear.

Lo, the face, by mortals spurned—
God is there!
Bright with rapture, strangely fair,
Lo, the eyes, to Heaven upturned,
God declare.

[Setphan *follows the* Procession *and*

remains when it has left. The sounds of the HYMN *die away. He picks up some of the flowers left by* EIRENE.

STEPHAN (*to self*).

A woman's tribute, doubtless. Why have they
Lovely instincts in all things perishable,
While, for the most part, in things permanent,
Lasting expressions of divine emotion,
Men have excelled women ? This rising dome
High overhead, that has on its broad wings
Drawn soaring up the souls of a great choir—
This poising song, a psalm in lasting stone,
Came from a man's heart, here to sing for ages.
This lesser shrine, informed by tender hands
More with the burden of His tenderness,
Weighing to faintness down the blissful heart,
Than with the clarity of brow serene,
The absolute, awful, innocence of Him,
That shall be Judge hereafter, robed and pale—
This, womanly, is still the cry of a heart
A man laid bare in passionate tribute.
—Yet in the transient and the permanent

The self-same passion lies—of tenderness,
Of harmony, and of all graciousness.
—Verily woman seems some delicate spirit,
Inhabitant of a nearer world to God
Than ours; that never parted very far
From Him, that never erred to those abysms,
Where ours has reeled and tottered; and yet man,
Doggedly striving upwards, conscious of
Far distance, still overcoming it, draws nigher,
Perchance—Ah, what know I, that speculate
On what I half forbid myself?

[*Finds and picks up a book by the altar steps.*

And here,
Doubtless, her book. (*Reads:*) "The Book of Holy Service."
Her name? Why not? She of the exquisite
Flowers; perhaps as exquisite herself.
Surely I saw, half-saw, her standing here!
(*Listening:*) Is this she coming?

[*He looks hurriedly at the name, and lays the book down.*

The steps have ceased. Is she, then, hiding? Watching
My mouselike curiosity perhaps,
And laughing softly somewhere, or perhaps
Scornfully at my novice-robes.—They cover
As trembling, blushing, and love-sick a heart
As any of my youthful fellows, boy
Or some half-longing, half-withdrawing girl,
When the old snake begins again to stir
In those new lurking-places, where he lay
Numb and asleep through the long winter of
Cold childhood. I am made no other than
My fellows. Ah, yet at times I seem to draw
Out of this heavy weight of flesh, at last
Free from the long, long history of earth,
These gross necessities, that Heaven imposed
Upon the far beginnings of our race,
Urging, and guarding, so, its lengthening steps;
Yet which to loosen, to escape from them,
Is our sole means—O Heaven! is it sole means
Of growing one with Thee? Answer me, answer,
Whether in Thy skies, or with Thy still small voice
Within the heart! Grant me Thy certain sign,
And if thou bidd'st me to deny myself

Even the food to the lips, even the air
To the lungs, much more this loving-kindness that
Invades the human heart, I will endeavour
—I could endeavour more firmly, were these things known.
(*Startled*:) Who comes? Ah, but these holiday-makers.

[*Enter two* COUPLES, *arm in arm.* STEPHAN *passes behind a pillar, but remains partly seen. The* 1ST WOMAN *turns round towards the* 2ND WOMAN'S *companion, an old fellow, richly dressed.*

1ST WOMAN.

Come along, granddad! How you do hobble along!

OLD MAN.

Don't call me granddad, woman. That I was once
Your husband for a term of cursèd years
Is no reason why you should still call me
Defamatory names.

1ST WOMAN.

Don't I still owe you

A grudge, for cheating me out of my dowry?
"Granddad" did I say? I might have called you names
Much truer and more personal; for never
Wilt thou be grandfather—but, always, cheat.

OLD MAN.

Peace, peace, woman! You left me by your own
Choice, perfectly freely. I neither beat you
Nor cruelly entreated you. You left me
Against my will, then (though heaven knows why against
My will—who am most content to lose a shrew),
And not a shadow of a claim have you
On me for money.

1ST WOMAN.

Not a claim, you say?
Why any man of decency, I vow,
Seeing how much I hated him—any
But you, would have gone off with another woman,
And so given me law-claim to my just dower,
To which so many years of your vile usage
Entitle me—in justice, if not in law;

Four quarters of your yearly income, cheat.

[*They continue arguing.*

YOUNG MAN (*to* 2ND WOMAN).

Then you persist, up to the bitter end?

2ND WOMAN.

What do you mean by your tragic "bitter end"?
The grey hairs of this very abused old man?
They are not so bitter as the bitterness
Of the tongue of your new-found inamorata.
Ah ha! Ah ha! Did I not prophesy?
Sooner however than I promised you,
You have taken consolation.

YOUNG MAN.

"Inamorata"!
Ah! "Inamorata"! You know I take her
Out of mere hatred of your cruelty.

2ND WOMAN.

I always thought you men were logical.

YOUNG MAN.

Yea, jest away, sour mouth!—Why do I care?—
Ah, well, I've loved you half a score of years,

Up from a little maid just in her teens;
And wooed thee, till thou seem'dst to love me too,
And bore me our two babes. And now thou leav'st
Both them and me. And had I proved a villain,
Then very well; 'twere right that thou shouldst go.
But a few quarrels is all that thou canst urge
Against me; yea, and ever the fault was thine.

2ND WOMAN.

Well, well, fault or no fault, I quit you here.
Perhaps my disposition is not admirable.
—But there! but there! Thou art well rid
Of me. Though why thou tak'st that shrew instead
I cannot guess. Give to her quick the dower
She clamours so for from my agèd choice.
Thou hast chosen in pique, like the hot-head thou art—
Given a rope thou'dst hang thyself in anger.
But here the rope may still be cut away.
I've chosen deliberately. For some time
At least I shall escape the hateful pinching
Of a poor home, and know at last the meaning
Of ease, and, oh, a thousand things I love.
Come, it's the game. It's come and cut again,

And hope for better luck and partners. Come!

YOUNG MAN.

And thus you leave your children! "Cut again"!
Great God! what offspring have I gotten of
This monster, to turn and sting me, should I press
Them to my empty bosom!

2ND WOMAN.

Intolerable
Temper! Poor chicks! Pray give the little vipers
To me; they will be safer. (*To* OLD MAN:)
Husband mine!
I bring my children, mind you, to your house.

OLD MAN.

I thought you lost them—*you* left *him*, I fancied?
But bring the darlings, bring them, by all means.
Let their dear mother bring a score of children,
So that she brings her own admired self too.

YOUNG MAN.

I would sooner see them dead than with you, woman—
Reared by a devil in the house of a fool.

1ST WOMAN.

Oh, well, my dear, they will not stay in *my* house.
The Sisters undertake, not I, the rearing
Of other women's children.

YOUNG MAN.

Neither you,
Nor any other lightly-come, shall touch
The skin of their little bodies. The Sisters!
Heaven bless the tender hands that rear the children
Away from the foul touch of their own breed!
Heaven breathe its spirit through the pure firm lips
That press their little brows, no longer soiled
With such maternal venom as these spill!

STEPHAN (*to self*).

A maid might fear that man!

OLD MAN.

Well, well, our union comes no nearer to us,
While we stay here a-squabbling—and cursing too.
Come on, come on! Which is our path to bliss?

[*He comes upon* STEPHAN.

Ah, you, young man, to judge from the cut of your coat
Are just the fellow for us. Now, where do they do
The funny little trick that tickles so—
Heigh presto ! two, that were, are turned to one ?
Where do they splice us, sir ?

STEPHAN.

Go to the verger (*points*)
Standing beside the pillar near yon door.
Ask him, my friend, and he himself will lead you.

[*He picks up* EIRENE'S *book again.*

OLD MAN.

Oh ho ! This is more like the real business !
Eh, eh ? Perhaps you have intentions of
Your own, eh ? A nice little wife to yourself
Some day, eh ? Oh ho ! The blood, even at my age !

1ST WOMAN.

Have you a cough, granddad ? You 're all of a tremble.

OLD MAN.

Bah !

[*The* COUPLES *go out. The* CHIEF PRIEST *has entered, unseen by them.*

CHIEF PRIEST.

Rather a noisy party to encounter,
Eh, my friend Stephan? When will these people learn
I wonder, that a little reverence,
A little modesty, as in the more
Immediate presence of Heaven, is needed
Here in the Temple? Ah, Heaven is indeed
Everywhere present; yet irreverence here
Seems less forgivable, since all here warns
Even the thoughtless, with up-lifted finger.

STEPHAN.

These seem as very Thoughtlessness itself—
A wedding party, already high in words.

[*He lays* EIRENE'S *book aside, away from the altar.*

CHIEF PRIEST.

A wedding party—So! our worst offenders
Are these. Poor souls! A marriage seems destructive
Of all sense of proportion—at a marriage
Man takes a higher standing than his God.
Ah, well, well, we must not be too hard, Stephan!
This celibate life—upon whose threshold here

Your young feet rest now (and I pray to Heaven
You falter not, but enter through this door
Which leads into the very sanctuary;
Though not all we who enter feel the touch
Of the God, who surely bides within the fane)—
There's a bad tendency in the lone heart
To harden, Stephan, which reveals itself
In little unexpected bitternesses
Of speech. Yet all are not so liable
To fault as I. We cannot have you grow
A gruff old fellow like your master, eh?

[*He takes* STEPHAN *by the arm and gazes at him.*

Well, well, we shall see what we shall see, Stephan;
And they shall see what we shall show them.

STEPHAN.

Sir!

My father, in all but this my bodily form
(Of such fair spirit as is in me, such
Small part of any nobler nature that
Is mine, truly my father)—do not, sir,

My father, think of me as one who lightly
Professes in each company what gains
Applause, or as one turning to the best
With a true instinct, but a frivolous will,
Blown like a feather where it would not go!
I trust, sir, that I do pursue the best,
So far as it is given to me to see
The best and understand—

CHIEF PRIEST.

Ay, Stephan, fear not!
You do pursue the best as it may show
Itself to you—and will pursue it to
The end. Well then?

STEPHAN (*passionately*).

I cannot see the truth:
The truth is hidden from me. I am a blind man,
Blind from my birth, blind by nature, groping
Among things false and true, and am unable
To tell the false from true, and yet must choose;
And forward thrust my hand to take, and, touching,
Draw back in fear that I have chosen the ill.
Ah, sir, it is not that I go where I

Would not; I know not where to go. I know not
But the foul nature in me, oozily hidden,
At drip for ever, a slow insidious stream,
Has sullied the broad volume of my soul.
I know not—I know not anything, my father,
But that some passion unknown, as it were floating,
A film in air, from out of marshy ground,
Creeps upward over all my sky, so that
I see naught clearly in my world—and know not
Whether high Heaven austerely has forbid
What muffled tones forbid in Heaven's high name—
Even though the tones roll faintly in your accents.

CHIEF PRIEST.

My well-loved son—my son in all but body
(And even whose body I could wish had sprung
From mine; and all my vows, and all the hopes
Built on them, so undone, could that but bind
Thy soul in trust the closer unto mine)—
Whom I have guarded and protected, up
From babyhood; coming, a little child,
Sweet with unconscious smiles, to me from out
Of longing parents' arms (that Death had twitched,

Rough with impatience, ere they would unfold
And leave thee—ah, long ago!)—I have not seemed
Rather a master, to your younger mind?
Nor that I wielded discipline and not
The loved and natural dominance of the father
Over the son?

STEPHAN.

Sir, sir!

CHIEF PRIEST.

Is there not utter friendship,
A perfect loving-kindness, 'twixt us twain,
The full trust, no reserve, that ever should be
Between true father and true son? [*They clasp hands.*
Show me
Your inmost heart in this, as in all else.

STEPHAN.

Nay, sir, it all is shown.

CHIEF PRIEST.

No hidden nook,
Where trembles a first passion?

STEPHAN.

For all my vehemence,

All is but theory still. No, no—(*to self:*) or if—
No, a mere fancy, a mere picture half
Effaced and half impressed within the mind.

CHIEF PRIEST.

Good, good! The soul will spring again into
Its natural form; the pressure be withdrawn.
—Ah, Stephan, chastity is that sweet chamber
(Quiet, so quiet, boy, so morning-still),
Where alone God will enter. Soil the heart,
License therein the show of earthly passion,
Taint all its atmosphere with luxury,
With smell of feasts, with scented robes—and who
Would then dare call God's passing spirit in,
To see the riot and the carnival,
To sit, perchance, at table, a bibber of wine?
The soul is God in man: I would it did
Nothing ungodlike—Ah me, ah me! I but
Remind myself how little active is
The God-part in myself; how oft I fail;
How faintly am inspired, but ever must ask
Myself, uneasily self-questioning,
After each action, after each word (rashly

Secure before)—"Would my God so have done"?
All are not thus, boy. God and peace are one,
And as we share God, so our peace is greater.

[*Musical instruments are heard, in prelude.*

Ah, music! That is well. It lifts the soul,
Compelling it to stir in passions chosen
From moments of a closer bond of feeling
With Heaven, than binds our hot and busy hours.

[*He sits.*

CHORAL SONG (*sung by unseen choir*).

What is the earth? It is the dwelling-place,
Where God in lowly form,
In lowly mortal flesh, abides,
A homely robe, that closely hides
His heaven splendour, for a term of days,
Of pain, and grief, and storm.

What is man's labour, on this balanced globe,
Above the pit of time?
What is his effort, ere he fall
Into the grave, that swallows all?
What his achievement, ere the pallid robe
Be his, and funeral chime?

Is, then, the shuttle of his wondrous brain
Weaving, the ages through,
(Guiding each amorous coloured thread
To lie by colour truly wed)
A pattern to be ravelled out again,
Unwoven, and woven anew?

His are the triumphs of the cunning hands,
To mould, and build, and find;
His are the conquests of the heart,
The self-subdued, the heavenly part;
His are the wars, waged over willing lands,
By the victorious mind.

What is the earth? It is the dwelling place,
Where God, in lowly form,
Has placed His spirit, to abide,
Till flesh no more can closely hide
Its heavenly splendour; till the term of days,
When peace succeeds to storm,

[EIRENE, DOROTHEA *and* DIONE *with her little son*, LAODAMAS, *have entered towards the end of the music. They pause at*

some distance from STEPHAN *and the* CHIEF PRIEST.

DIONE (*whispers.*)

Make search, sweet Dorothea, for our father
And my Alexis. We will wait you here.

[DOROTHEA *goes out.*

That is the Chief Priest. Fancy! never, never,
In all his sainted life, has he loved yet.
We'll wait just here, like mice, my own Eirenè,
And watch his perfect nose. Oh, hush! he speaks.

CHIEF PRIEST (*after meditative silence*).

Your father's song, Stephan! Well I remember
His happiness when first he heard it sung
Here in our Temple. Next there comes your own—
And, too, your happiness succeeding his
In my one life! The new thus antiquates
Ever the new, that once seemed scarcely ageable.
How long ere you, who look before, shall look
Backward as I, o'er the spread plain of life?
You leave the cloudy hills, from heaven, dear boy:
I climb those distant slopes you scarce can see.

DIONE (*whispers*).

Is it not lovely, what the dear priest says ?
Fancy, that handsome boy a poet too !

[STEPHAN *perceives* EIRENE *and gazes at her steadfastly.*

Eirenè, why, Eirenè—how you blush !
I did not speak, I only thought, of you.
Oh, well, I do not blame you, child. His look
Turned on you thus—Why, see, I sigh, myself.

CHIEF PRIEST (*after silent meditation*).

These doubts must rise within all thoughtful minds
Earlier or later. And the answer comes
From one's own breast, my Stephan. He whose heart
Answers persistently that human love,
Woman's love, is the one thing needful, though
Thereby God's love should fade to second place ;
He that has craved, and cannot still the craving,
That womanhood should enter in his life—
Let him obey that prophet in the heart,
Who bids him know himself, and bids him be

(That which is not without due honour paid)
The useful citizen, the tender husband,
The father and the basis of the state.
But he, in whom the oracle cries loud
Of God, and ever the name of God is heard,
And still of God, circling and rising through
The spaces of the mystic prophet's cave,
Till every lesser name, whose sound the heart
Brought with it to the prophecy, is dumb,
No name at last being heard but God's, and God's;
Such a consultant of the oracle
Hearing will still obey, whate'er the cost
Of seeming human happiness. Ask, boy!
Ask and listen; and fear not to obey!
And ask again; and fear not to obey!

[*Musical instruments play in prelude.*

Hark! It is your own song.

EIRENE (*whispers*).

Oh, 'tis not true,
It is not true, not true. 'Tis bitterly false.
It is not God or Love, but Love and God.

CHORAL SONG (*sung by unseen choir*).

Sad heart, what is thy pain? Pain is alone
A distant-breathing word,
Through which God's messaged love is told,
With sighs that pitying thoughts enfold.
O sad heart, listen! let the solemn tone
Pass not away unheard!

Sad heart, what is thy pain? Lo, Heaven's high gates
Are not of ruddy gold;
On neither fold do jewels gleam,
That bright as powdered planets seem.
Heaven's gates are red, with pain that not abates;
Of grief is either fold.

O pilgrim, murmur not! No cruel will
Tests all thy being with woe.
And nothing could thy joy assure,
But that which leaves thee throughly pure.
Pain is the sieve that proves the purest still.
No foulness through may go.

Nay! of thy evil days make no bemoan;
Nor be of Ill afraid!
For where the worlds created stood,
Behold, God saw all things were good,
No evil was, nor is; but God alone
*Dwells in the world He made.**

Sad heart, what is thy pain? Ah, Heaven's far gates
Shine not with ruddy gold;
On neither fold do jewels gleam,
That bright as powdered planets seem.
Heaven's gates are red, with pain that not abates;
Tears brighten either fold.

[*The* CHIEF PRIEST *silently grasps* STEPHAN'S *hand.*

DIONE (*whispers*).

Dear boy! I love so these idealists.
Fair thoughts are sweet—though all may act the same.

EIRENE (*whispers*).

We know, Dionè—do we not?—that heaven's

* See Note at end.

Gates are of love. Our passage into heaven
Is through his soul, who loves us; whom we love.

STEPHAN (*to self*).

Is this, then, love?

DIONE (*whispers*).

He speaks of other heaven,
Than yours or mine. Yours, too, is built of dreams.
His heaven with gates of pain be far from me!
And your heaven, entered by the gates of love,
Though 'twere a smiling paradise, my sister,
A summer party by a brimming stream,
Were not without its spiders and its showers,
Its unavoidable tempers, and a sense
That just a little privacy at times,
A hand-glass, too, would be real blessings. Yet,
Oh! life indeed were unendurable
Spent altogether on the obvious
Highroad of life, outside your gates of love.

CHIEF PRIEST (*after meditative pause, rising*).

Choose! choose! Your heart will teach you right.—
'Tis harder

Than I had thought. A father's guidance of
His son forms a cramped habitude that will
Not straighten itself at once. The hand goes back
To the old trick involuntarily. Yet, choose!
I cramp you too, whose limbs must be all free,
And win to loftier heights than I can climb.

[*He sees* EIRENE *and* DIONE; *and gazes earnestly at the former—and then at* STEPHAN.

Ah, well, I have heard your song, and will not hinder
You longer, Stephan. (*Hesitating*:) I have no further cause
To tarry. An old man must take his rest.

[*He moves forward.*

STEPHAN.

Let me come with you, sir. You are tired. You need
My arm. (*To self*:) Is this, then, love?—Take it, ye Heavens,
My sacrifice to him!

[*He takes the* CHIEF PRIEST'S *arm.*

Let me come too !
Why, now, this lordly independence, sir ?
Will you not take your own son's arm ? Take it
In token that I have not grieved you by
Wild words, that I have uttered to you, as
I have always uttered all my thoughts to you,
Careless of everything but of relief.

CHIEF PRIEST (*after murmuring inaudibly*).

Ah, boy, you tempt me, boy ! you tempt me, boy !
(My God, why trust I not Thy hand as guide ?)
—Ah, I am overcome, boy, overcome !
I take thy proffered arm, my son ; I take
Thy all ; I grasp at thee like an old spider,
That sucks the heart, cruelly sucks the heart,
Till all is dry and hollow, is cold grey ashes
A-crumble, dim-seen beneath his hairy breast.
I am the wicked spider, boy ; but I
Have you, boy, I have you—ha, ha ! I have you !

[*Enter* THEODORE *and* ALEXIS, *in the robes of the Order of Married Priests. They salute the* CHIEF PRIEST *deferentially.*

Ah, Theodore ! Alexis ! see here my pearl
Of sons, that I would fain put into a
Golden circle for safe-keeping, and wear
For ever on my hand, my hand for ever
Hid in my breast, for fear of a cozening world,
Where even one's table may harbour fingering thieves.

EIRENE (*whispering to* DIONE).

No, no, Dionè ! No, no, no, no, no !
Oh, I must die of shame !

DIONE (*whispers, holding* EIRENE'S *hand*).

Of shame ? O child,
I know too much of the world for shame at seizing
Good when Heaven offers it—from a priest's hand, too !

CHIEF PRIEST.

[*He follows the direction of the glances of* THEODORE *and* ALEXIS.

Are these maids yours ?

THEODORE.

These, are my daughters, sir.

Dionè, love ! Eirenè, love ! kneel humbly
Before our spiritual father here,
Whose blessing dowers you with more precious gifts
Than my great love, but lesser purity,
Bestows.

[*They kneel.*

I beg you, sir, receive them in
Your love.

CHIEF PRIEST.

[*He looks round in indecision for a moment ; and then raises his hand.*

See that ye violate it not !—
I charge ye unto purity ; to seek
God's active presence in you, through chastity
Of these your bodies ; to desire the boon
Of that high fellowship by Him avowed
With the pure in heart. So shall ye, seeking, find ;
Yearning, be satisfied. He that desires,
Already hath ; but to desire is rare.
May the Godhead in you answer unto
The call of the God in me—that am Thy servant,
O universal Godhead of the world !

(*To* STEPHAN:) My fit of weakness is o'erpast, dear son.

Yet must I go. I leave you, Stephan, as ever
I leave you, praying that His hands may still
Support you, Whose hands poise over all the worlds
All joys, all sorrows, life, and invisible death.
—Nay, boy, come not! I need you not. Nay, speak not!

(*To self*:) Can I not trust him fearlessly to God?
Whence is begotten this new-born timorousness,
This little tradesman's peddling trustlessness,
This shrinkage in the credit of my God?

[*He goes out.*

CHORAL SONG (*sung by unseen choir*).

Were I Thine own! then were I glad beyónd compare, and in my heart,
Full-filled, were joy, and in my soul a flowing calm,
As of a sea, where on the ripples shines the moon,
When night broods clear; were I, were I Thine own!

[*The remaining verses are softly sung whilst* THEODORE *and* STEPHAN *speak.*

Were earth nigh heaven! then would Thine angels
come and go, and we might see,
On woodland paths, or in our streets, their gleaming
brows!
And from their smiles and of their frowns, their
ways austere,
High lessons learn; were earth, were earth nigh
heaven!

Yet earth is Thine, although Thy heaven be distant
far;
Earth Thine, as heaven—and if our paths Thine
angels shun,
Yet are there smiles and there are frowns, and
solemn eyes, upon our ways—
Thou walkest here! for earth, for earth is Thine!

Make me Thine own! that I be glad beyónd com-
pare; and in my heart
Be joy fulfilled, and in my soul a flowing calm
(As of a sea, whereon the ripples gleam; the moon,
upon the night,
Shines clear from heaven)—Thy love, Thy love to own!

THEODORE (*to* STEPHAN).

Age seems to press more heavily of late
On the good Master's shoulder. Yet he spoke
Never of old with a more firm assurance.
His is the vision, sir, o'er which there towers
That certainty—to which how few attain!
The full, rich, various company of joys,
The smiles and laughter (so ready to the lips,
One is half fain to think the lips were made
For them), the Master values not, but sweeps
Majestically through them, where they crowd
And press on him. One glance of that clear eye,
The pallid scorn of that imperious brow,
One motion of that thin white length of hand
(No need for added awe of spoken words
From the austerity of his still lips),
And all the madness and desires of life
Drop their bold fingers, raised for a laughing touch
Of him, and the smiles chill, the tottering pleasures
(Balanced upon the kennel's edge to stride)
Feel sudden light strike each lewd face to frowns.
That his high standard is the right, who dares
To doubt? And yet—and yet, he frights some smiles

Away, that, if they are not Heaven's, are yet
Sweet of the earth, that is Heaven's handiwork.

STEPHAN.

I know not, I. He is our best exemplar,
Vouchsafed to urge a lesser generation.
I know not, I. (*To self:*) What is it to lose oneself,
When a whole universe is full of selves?
He stands aloft to save a thousand such,
And thousands more, a whole wide world of them—
What does he then who casts away himself?

[*The last verse of the* CHORAL SONG *clearly heard.*

DIONE.

Come! it is time. (*To* THEODORE:) Your daughters, sir, are here.

THEODORE.

Ah, my Dionè!—This is my daughter, sir.

DIONE (*to* STEPHAN).

I am the practical spirit of our party,
Whose mind is set no higher than the small

Conveniences in things, the promptitudes
That make the wheels of life fit in together.
(Pray, will you not accompany us? Ah, do!)
This is my sister.—And, Alexis, love!
Alexis!

[*She leaves them.*

EIRENE.

Your Choral Song, sung but a while ago
(We stood here close at hand—You may have seen)—
So sweet!—What pleasure to you!

STEPHAN.

I never had
So much from it before as now, when it
Has praise from you.—You did praise, did you not?
The poor, you know, ever distrust the givers
Of too good gifts. Give to a beggar of alms
A golden coin, and he, instinctively,
Will test it with his teeth. So I, that am
A beggar of other coins, getting one far
More precious than I dreamed of, without right,
After brief confidence, could scarce believe,
Yet take my thanks, at last.

EIRENE.

Believe me, I
Give no false counters for true coin; although
I fear it is no gold I give, for gold
Comes from the treasury of a well-stored mind,
And mine is stored but with kind thoughts and wishes,
That scarce make up a solid wealth.

[*The rest go out.*

Shall we follow them?

STEPHAN.

Ah, but one moment! See!

[*He moves across and picks up* EIRENE'S *book. She partly follows.*

I found it by the flowers—and they are yours,
Your gift to the altar, surely? I placed it here
Hoping to see—hoping to give it you.

EIRENE (*smiling*).

And if you had not met me, how should I
Have found my book, here were I had not left it?

STEPHAN.

Ah, pardon me!—And yet I think I should
Have met you, somehow, somewhere.

[*He gazes into her eyes.*

EIRENE (*turning her eyes from his.*)

I do not know.

[DOROTHEA *enters.*

Ah, Dorothea! we are coming. Come!

[*The first notes of the approaching choir are heard. They stand aside and wait.*

CHORAL SONG (*sung by choir, gradually approaching*).

Semi-chorus I.

Light ye the lamps within the fane,
Whose arc the heavens uphold;
For night is like a shadow lain
On shore and city, dale and wold;
And creeping mists approach, the earth
In darkling robes to fold!

[*The* CHOIR *enters in procession.*

Semi-chorus II.

Flame the temple from the shrine
Through choir, through nave, through
columned aisle,
And all the temple's great design:
Flame its holy ground, the while
Ecstatic choirs
Thread the intricate pile:

Semi-chorus I.

Bright are the lamps within the fane
From dim-seen roofs that glow,
Each swaying by a gleaming chain,
To rhythmed motion slow;
Whereto the hand has set them free,
Or gusts of music blow.

Semi-chorus II.

Sweet is the music that still blends
Its many tones to one delight,
And thrills to shrillest joy, and sends
Aloft its sounds to scale the night,

Or, stooping, breathes a softer note,
And in devotion bends.

Semi-chorus I.

Such are the souls of men divine,
Whom earth of purest flame has proved ;
Who swaying 'neath Heaven's touch do shine,
Still moving as Heaven moved.

Semi-chorus II.

And such the music in their hearts,
That Heaven have loved.

[*The last couple of the procession goes out.*

CURTAIN.

ACT II, Scene i.

Scene : *a river bank.* Time: *midday in summer.*

[*A* Chorus of women *is discovered seated by the river-side (to the right). The river flows between banks of some little steepness; and on the further side there is a meadow, which the* Choruses of children *and* of Men *enter later. A level bridge crosses the stream. There are bushes growing at the edge of the bank partly hiding it from the other side of the stream.*]

1st maiden *of the Women's Chorus.*

Here is our trysting place ; but slow the noon
To bring our lovers.

2nd maiden.

See, where the hot sun

Blazes above yon steepest hill, that scans
Our forest like a sentinel stag, apart,
Guarding the treasured herd of grazing does!
Noon is not far!

3RD MAIDEN.

I am a-drowse already.

CHORUS OF WOMEN (*sings*).

The kine at midday 'neath the trees
Stand sleepily, in circled shade;
The goats beside them, lain at ease,
Their couch on browsèd grass have made;
The sultry Sun his course has stayed,
All somnolent from travelling.
The glade's at rest. We lie and sing;
Nor sleepy woods an echo fling.

The lords of these our herded kine
(Free lords to range the island meads)
For idle memories decline
The labour of their lessened needs;
And scarce each train its monarch heeds,
Save where half indolently kind
The latest to the lord assigned
Awaits the hour his love to bind.

A simple strain our flutes shall sound,
Of notes commingled sweet and clear.
Crowned with low flowers, that near the ground
In painted loveliness appear,
A simple strain in song we rear.
Of pastoral love our melody,
Here where we singing closely spy
On Nature's loving mystery.

Though temples rise in columned height,
Insistent steepest heaven to gain;
Though altars blaze with heapèd light,
Whose spicy smokes to heaven attain,
And fragrant wines the marble stain—
Though here no costly sacrifice,
Nor columned temples heavenward rise,
Here, closest, Heaven all open lies.

[*Enter* DIONE, *with* LAODAMAS, *and* DOROTHEA (*from the left*). *They seat themselves apart from the* CHORUS.

DOROTHEA.

O maidens, tell us! Have you seen our sister,

The maid Eirenè, passing by this way?
For she came on before us, seeking this spot,
She said, and yet we find her not.

1ST MAIDEN.

We saw
Her here an hour ago, wandering forlorn,
Past us and, yonder, on beside the stream.

2ND MAIDEN.

—Following the banks, eyeing the idle eddies,
And sighing as she went.

3RD MAIDEN.

Lo, she returns.

[EIRENE *enters (from the right), singing.*

EIRENE (*sings*).

Love, a river, flows between
Bankèd ways, that love makes green.
Love, a river, flows for aye;
Flows and knows not reason why.

DOROTHEA.

Ah, then, Eirenè, here our wanderer comes

EIRENE.

Why! very dear, have I been wandering long?

DIONE.

No, we're but just arrived. Sing on, sing on!

EIRENE (*sings*).

Gleamy drops of dew adorn
Greenest carpet of the morn.
Dewy tears, without annoy,
Mark the sunniest fields of joy.

Oh, the morning sun of Love!
Sings the lark from heaven above.
Sings the earth, and sings the sky,
Rings the world with melody.

Tears descend like summer rain;
All the heavens are dark again.
Shelter none by Love is found;
Beats the rain on sodden ground.

Drips the rain from all the trees,
Rattling down, as sighs the breeze.
All Love's prospect, ah, how chill!
Stream, and bank, and misty hill.

Where shall Love that weepeth turn?
Where shall Love of shelter learn?—
Love must bide in open air.
Love is brave, the storm to bear.

Love, a river, flows between
Bankèd ways, in summer green.
Love, a river, flows for ever;
Winter's grip shall stay it never.

(*Speaks:*)

Sing, Dorothea!

DOROTHEA.

There is deeper love

(*Sings:*)

Love, an ocean, 'neath the skies
Moves to choric melodies,
Deep or shrilling, wild or slow,
Agonied, or brooding low.
Pause and list! So far inland
Comes no sound of tunèd strand?

Love, though faint the choric sound,
Rings each life with music round.
Though unheeded, still to shore
Surge its waves for evermore.
Pause and list ! Though far inland,
Come the sounds of tunèd strand.
Life by love en-islanded
(Isle of Life to Ocean wed),
Life may love and, faithless, yet
May her lord, the sea, forget.
Yet she lists. How far, but clear,
Ocean-love, thy voice to hear !

All the rivers to the sea
Eddy on, unceasingly ;
Swollen flood, and brook, and rill,
Flowing on the sea to fill.
Earthly love shall end in Thee,
Love Divine, of passion free.

Love, an ocean, 'neath the skies
Chants œonian melodies,
Deep or shrilling, wild or slow,
Agonied, or brooding low.

EIRENE.

Ah, sister, Dorothea, thy Heavenly Love—
Transcends it not a mortal woman's power?
Is not to woman ever some man God—
All of high God her soul can visualise?
Is not to woman (even womanhood
Cloistered and veiled, and barred and blinded from
All entrance to, even sight corruptible of,
The wedding-chamber in her inmost heart—
Lest she should, seeing, know her inmost heart),
Is not to woman even God on high,
Or God on earth (when that he dwelt on earth),
But man's diviner qualities, enshrined
Within the bosom of the noblest man,
That ever woman's tenderness conceived?
Ah, Dorothea, I would love with thee
All the immensity of infinite God;
Yet will the narrow cup that is my heart
Hold not the endless vista of the sea,
Stretching in breadth beyond my mortal eyes,
Deep in unplumbed and blind profundity.
My heart, dear one, will hold so much, no more,
Of all of loveliness, as heaven shall mete

Into the vessel of a kindred soul.

DOROTHEA.

Yet may there be no boundaries to love,
And every heart be infinite that loves.
I know not Earthly Love, sweet—as you see,
Who look into the waters of my soul,
Where you have gazed upon your own maid-self
(Where you—O sister, do I guess you not?—
Will gaze upon your own maid-self no more)—
I know not love, Eirenè, yet I feel
True love is of the infinite element
That is the boundless main of Heavenly Love.
True love draws nearer to, true love must end
Where all must fain begin, in love of Heaven.

EIRENE.

Ah, Dorothea, be it not thine to scorn
The river, that it is not central sea!

DOROTHEA.

Ay, every river hurries to the sea,
And every stream is drawn from out the sea—
But with the sea my sluggish heart would stay,

Whom the world giddies with its ceaseless change.

DIONE.

It is with wonder that I harken to you,
Babes as you are in this our world of joy,
Yet analytical of the throbs that dart
Forward and backward on its hidden strings;
It is with wonder (wonder and smiles, Eirenè,
And you, sweet Dorothèa) that I harken.
For you have entered not this world of joy,
In which I entered not until ye saw
(How few the years ago!) me as a bride,
Trembling and breathless, lay my hand upon
The opening door of its fair throngèd fane;
Whence surged upon me, fainting, cloudy fumes,
Sweet scents of the impending sacrifice,
Music to enslave the very soul, of flutes,
And the stretched thrumming skin, and myriad bells,
And all the smiling concourse of the temple
Crying, in one long loud compelling shout,
My name, my bride-name—"O Dionè, come!"
I entered then the temple of our world,
Who knew no world until I entered it.

And, O maid-sisters, scorn us not that are
Called by that loud compelling concourse-shout
To enter, and to share the worshippers' joy.
For, little sisters, who hath built the fane?
And, O my sisters, who hath bound our hearts,
So that the cry of that glad gathered throng
Strains, like close woven bands of garlanded flowers
Beneath the unresisting breasts and round
The voluntary hands, and draws us on,
Until the temple-portal is o'erpast,
And all the silken bands are loosed, and all
The need of tender violence is gone?
Why are we dowered with such munificence
In joy, bride-gifted with a thousand flocks,
A hundred lowing herds of chosen kine,
The lordship of the fat and watered plain
Beneath the dominant feet of the high walls
Whence smiles the city, and the citadel
Crowns like a snake its stores of untold gold—
Why, little sister, are we rich in joy,
If of our dower we give no joy away?
For joy is double-handled, Dorothea,
Two-bladed like the scissors on your chain,

And meeting must be met, and taking give.
Why, Dorothea, are we dowered with joy,
If of our joy we should not give nor take?
I am not so mistrustful of fair boons
As to receive, and ponder, and grow grey
In wondering on the uses, in disuse,
Of what the active world has still conceived
Given for plain use, not mystic services.
Love, sisters, is a gift for innocent joy.
What further use it has I know not of.
But, would the world would wholly side with Love
For Love's alone sworn enemy to Hate,
And Hate is sexless mother of all ills!

CHORUS OF WOMEN (*sings*).

Oh, come without fearing;
No terror is known
In our woods, where their carpet
The pine-trees have strown;
Where gardens of roses
Are spread o'er the plain
Surmounting the forests,
That yonder, again,

Meet enfolding the level,
And upward pursue
(Like armies arrested,
Their breath to renew)

The soul of the fastness,
Who flees o'er the snow,
Where the forests enchanted
No further may go.

Snow-white are the summits,
And blue is the sky,
And the hawk o'er the valley
Could motionless fly,

To where shadows from eastward
Spread cool down the sides,
And come crossing the foam that
The valley divides.

Oh, speed without fearing;
No terror is ours;
No steps here are haunted
By Fright and its powers;

But green pathways inviting,
O'ershadowed by trees,
Lead upward to spaces
Wide-spread to the breeze,

Where roses of Eden
Trail wild o'er the plain,
And God dwells, and enters
Our spirit again.

Oh, tread without fearing;
Speed free as a child;
For this is the forest
Of Love undefiled!

Oh, come without fearing,
Step glad as a child:
Our wands know no magic
But Love undefiled!

DOROTHEA.

True hearts, Dionè, hold so much of Heaven,
Illimitable, as is enfolded in
(For our weak human grasp) a human soul.
True love were, then, to love the God confined,

For this brief life, in perishable form.
And in such presence, as before the angels
(Bright incarnations of the One Divine,
Made for the soul's eyes, as the opaque clay
Is animate with God for the clay's vision)—
As before angels the admitted soul,
New come to heaven, new groping in the light,
Faints at their white innocuous radiancy,
And by old habitude would shield the eyes
Lest the bright blindness pierce the darkened balls,
So I would worship with bowed head in fear
(Oh, such a tenderness of love in fear!)
The bright revealèd godhead in man's form.
Yet, is this Earthly Love, Dionè mine?
Such love the innocent love of maid for man?

DIONE.

Nay, little, sister!

DOROTHEA.

How shall the soul, then, keep
Its radiancy through smoke of earthly love?
What intermissions in the vestal service,
What loosened links in the perpetual worship,

What stains of black forgetfulness besmirched
On the white robes that fold the singing train,
Escape the vision of the hidden God,
Amid the fumes, and cries, and mocking praise?
Here is the temple, O Dionè, in
The quiet heart, from the wild crowd withdrawn
Into a little by-way, while the world
Noisily surges to some popular fane,
Amid a breaking spray of high Evoës,
Past the strait entrance and its harboured calm.
Here is the temple of the most high God.
Ah, if the somnolent priest in quietude
Doze, or be busy in nameless luxury!

EIRENE.

Nay, love is not all thus a shame, belovèd.

DIONE.

Love is not any part a shame, Eirenè.

[*She embraces her child.*

And here I press against a mother-breast
My little son, that is a good man's son—
And he a priest, yet neither somnolent

Nor busy in a shameless luxury!
Come, tell me, then, too proud of maidenhood—
What were the fate of this our world, designed
(Or so they say) to school our race for heaven,
If all our good men should grow celibate,
And none but thieves and liars get them sons?
I bid you, O too proud of maidenhood,
Gather our thieves, our murderers, our mad,
Our vile at heart, thinkers of evil things—
Go, bind these less-than-men in monasteries:
These should be celibate, and not our saints.

DOROTHEA.

O sweet Dionè, sister, forgive my tongue,
That strays unwittingly, it knows not where,
And wandering into fairest quietudes
Stirs all to war, and cries upon the war—
Bringing, itself, the evil that it finds!
Forgive me, sweet Dionè, that hast served,
In motherhood, Heaven and the embattled good!
The godhead radiant in thy son, O mother,
Shone from thy wedded soul into thy womb—
O double godhead, blessed motherhood!
O God reborn within a woman's limbs!

Ah, what am I, who prate of maidenhood,
And question love, and scan its purity!

DIONE.

Pure love is simple love; and love once doubting
Lets by its doubt the serpent error in.

1ST MAIDEN *of the Women's Chorus (sings).*

Once in an Eden perfect love was known:
Peace ringed the land, and all the summery heat
Shook with the insistent wood-dove's murmured tone;
And Love through all that woody region beat,
In wingèd tremor, o'er the meadows green
(Scarce under golden chalices to be seen),
And winding streams a-brim, with lilies strown.

Ah, long ago, long ages lost to view
Adown the track of far-receding time,
We left our Eden-land, and memories few
Cling to us of that distant storied clime.
Yet, where the scene is kindly, we abide,
At anchor on the ever-flowing tide,
And songs of veilèd Eden-land renew.

(*Speaks:*)

I have forgotten. I know not how it goes.

2ND MAIDEN.

Oh, well, start somewhere else. "Bid me not cloak."

1ST MAIDEN (*sings*).

Bid me not cloak my face for chidden shame!
Strew not my heart with ague-frost of fear!
Stir not upon my cheeks the blood to flame,
And from my brow withhold thy words that sear!
Ah, cruel tongue, in specious sadness hiding
The venomed fork, within thy mouth abiding,
Spill not thy froth upon Love's lovely name!

Break not Love's wings! Ah, God, what hand again
Can mend those downy plumes, with which he oared
The seas serene of heaven? Ah, Hate, refrain;
Dear Hate, take mine, but, oh, his life afford!
Come, tender Hate! My bosom thus revealing,
I bid thee lay thy coils where, coldly stealing,
Thy glowing tooth shall turn my blood to pain.

2ND MAIDEN (*suddenly rising*).

Ah ! here they come, surely !

3RD MAIDEN.

At last !

CHORUS OF WOMEN (*rising*).

At last !

But where ?

1ST MAIDEN.

'Tis but the little ones returned.

[*A* CHORUS OF CHILDREN *enters, on the farther side of the river.*

1ST CHILD.

Shall we come over the stream to you, sisters ?

2ND MAIDEN.

No, little ones; wander over the meadow,
For we shall come that way to you ere long.

2ND CHILD.

Well, shall we sing you our new song before
We go, sisters ?

DOROTHEA.

Ay, sweethearts, sing your song.

1ST CHILD (*clapping her hands*).

Sing, children, sing! Here is sweet Dorothea,
She who so lately was a child with us,
And led the chorus she now listens to.

CHORUS OF CHILDREN (*sings*).

Joy-born children, Joy, we greet thee,
Lord of birth, creative power!
Issue from thy temple-palace,
Lord, and largesse on us shower!
High we greet thee, spite of Sorrow,
Sullen rumours ever flinging,
Broadcast through our sunny city,
Of a king that frowns at singing.
High to thee our clashing pœans
At thy gates we cry, believing
Thou, within, wilt still be Joy—
Heaven and Earth one rule receiving.

2ND CHILD.

Farewell, sisters! we'll wait for you in the meadow.

CHORUS OF WOMEN (*dispersedly*).

Farewell, sweethearts! Farewell, farewell, farewell!

DOROTHEA.

Farewell, sweethearts!

CHORUS OF CHILDREN.

Farewell, sweet Dorothea

1ST CHILD.

Come to us in the meadow, Dorothea:
I have a secret to whisper to you there.

CHORUS OF CHILDREN (*dispersedly*).

And I. And I. And I.

DOROTHEA.

Later, sweethearts.

I'll come ere you go home.

1ST CHILD.

Till then, goodbye!

[*The* CHORUS OF CHILDREN *goes out.*

LAODAMAS (*running*).

I'm coming with you, too. I'm coming, too.
I'm coming with you, too. Wait, wait! Wait, wait!

[*He follows them out.*

DOROTHEA.

Take care of him, dear children, till I come.

EIRENE.

Dear loves! Sweet innocents!

CHORUS OF CHILDREN (*from behind*).

Goodbye! Goodbye!

DIONE (*after a pause*).

I know not, no, not I, what proves the right,
What proves the wrong, to be the right or wrong.
The rights or wrongs of any case, the pros,
The analytical cons, the verbal niceties,
Are mental forms beyond my grasp of hand.
The balanced weights of thought upon the scales
(Stopping the heart with quaking hesitation
At the addition of a scruple's bulk,
To tilt or this or that side up or down)
Are processes beyond my narrow brain.
Heaven has not blessed me with discrimination,
Nor practised to refinement my dull nerves,
To measure accurately on a poising
Finger these coins of speech, to grasp here right
Stamped guinea gold, true currency, and full

Up to their crinkled rims of sparkling metal—
To thrust back scornfully the fraudulent token,
The false, light, lying, muddily alloyed.
Heaven, when it dropped me like a new-born lamb
Into the meadow-land of backward life,
Did not contémplate for me need to err
Through city streets into the haunts of men,
Their marts and their exchanges, but infused
Horror and terror in me of paved ways.
I with the flock would dwell, the other sheep,
The silly folk that do, of what seems good
In their own eyes, so much as is allowed
By shepherd and by dog (who guide our days,
By laws of heaven or by caprice of pride—
Or higher or lower, as it may be—but
Accepted of us, and not understood).
Why they do guide I know not, whither guide
I know not, why they strike or slay I know not;
But that they guide I know, and strike, and slay.
I only pray to 'scape the rod, and do,
In all the rest, what seems good in my eyes.
But this I know (and, ask me where I learned—
I learned it from the mother-earth whose breast

We lie so close upon) a kindly Heaven
Pitifully judges of the driven flock;
Of straying sheep, of shepherd, and of dog.
I cavil not, and nothing blame of all
The pastures that with blows have been forbidden,
The streams where fain I would have drunk my fill,
Of bitter winds, the rain, the pelting hail,
The snow deep-laden on the wintry hills,
Sickness and death, and all the manifold
Sorrows and disappointments, pains that strangle
The heart, and aches that make the body heavy—
I cavil not, and nothing blame; nor will I
Fear God that gave, for good, both sun and rain.
My worship is a simple one—I strive
To thank high Heaven, and do no harm to others;
And my belief—that lowly worship is
Not all rejected, though without reward.

DOROTHEA.

Heaven is all good, and from its goodness known
There flows, by natural consequence, content.
And though we strive, and striving fail to be
All, or a part, of what we set before
Our eyes, as [illegible] attain;

Though strife that fails, though search that finds not, though
Blind eyes that see no other search that finds,
No other strife that, failing not, succeeds,
No other triumph on our battled plain,
No other victors but the lonely Great,
Fabled, or rumoured of in distant fields
Beyond the vision of our lesser war—
Though failures such, and search that never finds,
Cast the low spirit bruised and moaning down,
Yet is the simple faith that Heaven is good
(Full good, perfect good)—water to wash the wounds,
That quake, and gape, and stain the trampled ground,
Wine to the fainting spirit, that revives,
Fire to the heart, that was benumbed and chill,
Breath to the throat, that swells with volumed sound,
A clarion to the tongue, that loud and long
Hurls its defiance at the baffled foe,
Dimly at move upon the nightly plain.
Such faith is courage, sisters, welling up
Clear and perennial in high hearts to aid
In this the foughten field of human life.

[1ST MAID *of the Women's Chorus*

rises and looks out.

DIONE.

Ah, strenuous sister, life is to me a scene
Of peace, or peaceful contest with the ills
That man encounters, not from an enemy,
But from the elements—earth, water, fire,
And air, that stirring by their general laws
Grip hard at times the lesser frames of men.

[*The* MAID *standing beckons to another who also rises.*

EIRENE.

Ah, well, to me life is nor war nor peace,
But joy—or joy might be— ah me, or joy
Might be.

1ST MAID.

'Tis they, 'tis they! Sisters, they come!

CHORUS OF WOMEN (*dispersedly, rising*).

At last! They come! They come at last At last!

2ND MAID.

Sing, sisters, sing to them a greeting song!

CHORUS OF WOMEN (*sings*).

He comes from where the mountain lawns
Look steeply down on dreamy vale;

Where near his feet the chasm yawns,
And glides the slope of treacherous shale.

His feet to roam afar are taught,
To scale the pyramids of snow,
That rocky pinnacles have caught
From cloudy storms through œons slow.

Where ibex leaps, where eagles scud
On ragged pinions soaring wide,
Where all the waves of heaven their flood
Fling sheer upon the mountain-side ;

Where bear can climb, where goat can scale,
By narrow steps their tread has worn—
Floats oft at dawn upon the gale
His bugle note, how faintly borne.

His feet afar are taught to roam,
His eye to soar, his soul to dare ;
Yet, ah, his heart turns gladly home,
Where I his lowly cottage share.

[CHORUS OF MEN, *dressed as hunters, enters on the further side of the river.*

1ST HUNTER.

Give them an answer, lads. Now, best fashion there!

CHORUS OF MEN (*sings*).

Her steps are by the cottage lawn,
Where foams the stream adown the vale;
And light she trips as straying fawn,
Or mountain mists that upward trail.

Ere risen sun her mate has crept
From near her side, and stol'n away,
And she has sweet and lonely slept
Until the rising of the day.

Then swiftly here, and swiftly there,
Her lightsome feet to stir begin;
She frowns beneath a world of care
Till all is spick and span within.

She trips bareheaded to the door,
Her shaded eyes the hills survey;
And everywhere her steps before
A herald song prepares her way.

The lawn with linen white she spreads,
Her cambrics deck the hedges green;
And here and there a cloudlet sheds
Its floating shadow, briefly seen

[*The* WOMEN OF THE CHORUS *have advanced separately across the river, each singling out her mate.*

She rests beneath a shady bough,
Till sleepy noon her brow has pressed.
I ope the gate. She stirs, and now
She holds me fondly to her breast.

[*The* CHORUSES *embrace and go out in couples, singing.*

CHORUS OF WOMEN (*sings*).

His feet afar are taught to roam,
His eye to soar, his soul to dare;
Yet, ah, his heart turns gladly home,
Where I his lowly cottage share.

[*Enter* THEODORE *and* STEPHAN. THEODORE *stands listening and detains* STEPHAN *by the arm.*

CHORUS OF MEN (*sings*).

She rests beneath a drooping bough,
Her chin on gently heaving breast
Lies round. I ope the gate, and now
I to her heart am fondly pressed.

[*The last couple goes out.*

THEODORE.

(*Hums:*)

And now

I to her heart am fondly pressed.

(*Speaks:*)

Young love is irresistibly attractive.

(*Hums:*)

Her steps are by the cottage lawn,

Where foams the stream adown the vale—

(*Speaks:*)

Good, good! Young love is cure of all evils.
Of all the evils that the young man knows;
For mercifully, the knowledge of the young
Is limited, not only in the things
That they should know, but, for the most part, in
The things they should by no means know—of grief,
That no lips of the world can kiss away;
Woes to be healed but by the intangible
Spirit, unseen, unheard, scarce to be felt,
And only to be felt at blessèd moments
(So rare, ah me, so rare!)—at times of rapture

And exaltation, when the breath of Heaven
Lies momentarily upon the brow,
A shadow-breath of lips, prayed for, wept for,
A touch of shadow-hands on the bent shoulders.

DIONE.

Now, my own father, and what preachest thou
With such impressiveness? The wretchedness
Of this our very fairly happy world—
If only one will make the best of it)?

[*She takes* THEODORE'S *arm and prepares to lead him away.*

Well, thou shalt sermonise thy daughter, preacher—
To me thine eldest born, inheretrix
Of that wild fire thou flam'dst in youth withal,
O grave and reverend bearded priest and sire,
Contemner (more or less) of this deceit,
This painted image, this masquing, misnamed joy—
And tenderest judge that ever wild heart had;
Mild, wise confessor, and true comforter!
I do assure you, father, I have need
In urgency both of confession and
Of comfort.

THEODORE.

What new sin is thine, my fair
Dionè?

DIONE.

What, must I tell you here in public!
These are young people, and censorious.
Nor do I altogether know my sin,
What it may be and when I chanced on it,
But only that I am not what I should be,
At least I am not what I might have been,
Were I not what I chance to be. A load
Is on my spirits, that one, unknown, has bound
Behind me whilst I sat, sunning myself
At rest, and viewed the peaceful outspread scene.
Come, father, we will cut it off together,
And scrutinise its close packed heaviness.

[DIONE *leads off* THEODORE. *They go out* (*to the left*).

DOROTHEA.

And I must go, to lead the children home.
Farewell, Eirenè, and farewell, friend Stephan!
I go to lead my straying children home.

Farewell!

[*She moves towards the bridge.*

STEPHAN.

Farewell!

EIRENE.

Nay, Dorothea, stay!

STEPHAN.

Ah, gentle lady, let her go, let her go!

[DOROTHEA *crosses the bridge and goes out singing.* STEPHAN *gazes into* EIRENE'S *face.*

DOROTHEA (*sings as she leaves*).

As woodland lakes, O child, so are thine eyes,
Where sky and cloudlets sleep,
And 'neath still leaves shy forms, that fear surprise,
From mirrored thickets peep.

Come startled birds, come elves, and sprouting horn
O'er bearded face and brown,
Seen in thy waters; or, at stillest morn,
God will himself smile down.

CURTAIN.

ACT II, Scene ii.

Scene: *the river bank, as before.* Time: *later, the afternoon.*

[*Enter* Chief Priest, Theodore, *and* Dione (*on the left*). Dione *gazes anxiously along the path into the distance.*

Theodore.

Here do our folk most pass, out to the meadow,
The fairest spot of a fair country-side.

Chief priest.

This spot itself is fair. Few can be fairer.

Dione

Oh, sir, our Happy Meadow is far fairer!

(*To self*:) If they should come! ah me, if they should come!
His calm austerity would slay their love;
Stab with chill steel, and wipe the blood, and smile,
Inscrutable as Heaven, less just, less pitiful.
(*To* CHIEF PRIEST:) You are not tired, my father?
'Tis not far.

CHIEF PRIEST.

My steps are old, fair daughter, and tire quickly.
Yet since we chance to meet so far a-field
(I have not ranged so wide for many a day),
Let us go forward to the Happy Meadow.
I'll trust its name from your young lips, my child,
Who look high priestess unto Happiness,
And choric leader of festivities
To grace his worship in a perfect spot.

THEODORE.

'Tis but a little distance. Yet pause here
A while, and rest.

[THEODORE *sits down, and the* CHIEF PRIEST *after him.*

DIONE.

'Tis such a little distance ;

CHIEF PRIEST.

Old age, my child, has an arithmetic
Of its own, in which each number is worth
Many times more than what it was in youth :
One has the value that was three's or four's ;
So half a dozen spread a score of miles.
Yet grant me but a moment's grace, fair priestess,
And I will come—will gladly come, and worship
Happiness with you in your meadow-temple.

DIONE.

(*To self*:) Oh, they will come ! I know that they will come !
His pale serenity numbs me like wintry sun.

THEODORE.

It is a happy spot to which we go.
The children band together to frequent
The meadow, like a herd of nimble deer.

DIONE.

They will be turning homeward, for the sun

Drives steeply down his western hill already.

THEODORE.

Ay, ay! The men and maidens, too, frequent it;
Join hands and dance, or wander pair by pair.

DIONE.

They will have turned their thoughts to home; the moon
Faces the sun high in the eastern sky.
These we shall find preparing for the road,
Amid the break-up of their jollity.

THEODORE.

We can enjoy the solitude the more
When they have gone, and left the meadow bare
Of human sights and sounds, which spread before
The world of nature and delight a veil
(Rich if you will, yet ever a veil) concealing
Bride-limbs more fair than any web e'er woven.
Then, at a distance, we can follow home
Behind the chanting troop of men and maids,
Slowly this way again, over the bridge here;
So back once more, at hour of moonlit eve.

CHIEF PRIEST (*rising*).

Come, let us move. Forgive an old man's weakness,
My daughter—who, I trust, thyself wilt know
Full years, though years thus full bring ever their burden.

[*They approach the bridge.*

Yea, verily, ours is a lovely land,
Specially favoured when the world was made;
Given to this nation—whom high Heaven forgive
Its manifold sins! purging the sins, if need,
With ruddy fire, to search the roots of evil,
That mat the earth and choke the springing good;
Burning and purging with unsparing hand,
Rending the festered evil from the soil,
Ploughing the folk and harrowing it—that so
This nation be again clean land to till,
Fit earth to bring forth fruit of noble deeds,
Rich with all gentleness, all purity,
Religion, valour, all self-sacrifice,
And love to the death (to death, and death beyond)
Of this dear land where we were born. Hear me,
Great God! hear me who dare to call this land

Thy land, Thy own land, Thy especial plot
In all the wide circumference of the globe;
Thy land, Thy vineyard, and the home Thou chosest
For this great race; that turn to Thee blind eyes
(Blind eyes that see Thee not, deaf ears that will
Not hear Thy whispered words, nor trumpet tones),
Grope blindly, stumble blindly, being men,
Born liable to error at all seasons—
And yet such men, O God, as thou hast filled,
And fillest still, and shalt fill to all time,
Up to the brimming edge of the trembling heart
With the rich wine of Thy spirit, O God,
The spirit of the saint, and of the hero,
The spirit of the pure, the brave, the free.
Ah, lovely land, Heaven blessed thee when it made thee:
Take thou my lesser blessing, too, dear land!

[*He holds out his hands.*

What other land is like to thee, dear land!

THEODORE.

None other, verily! none other; none!

[*They move forward.*

DIONE (*gazing*).

(*To self*:) Ah me, I see them come. Oh, slow! come slow!
(*Aloud*:) Wait not for me but go you on, dear fathers.
My nimbler feet will overtake your way.

[*She pauses, and stands gazing.*

(*To self*:) Here I will wait and give them distant sign.
Yet, such their innocence, they scarce will heed.

[*The old men lean upon the bridge.*

CHIEF PRIEST.

Nature is God's art, and the scene before us
Opens to us, if we have eyes to read,
God's very breast—that hidden breast the world
Looks for in vain, searches for, longs for, weeps for
Crying "O Lord, I labour heavy laden;
"O Lord, support my burden in Thine arms:
"Rest me a little while upon Thy breast,
"Cherish me, hearten me, touch my forehead
"With tangible lips, that I may know that I
"Am dear to Thee verily: then could I
"Take up again my load, a load no more,
"But very sign and symbol that I strode
"Thy voyager, Thy merchant, bringing fragrant

" Spice of repentance, and rich bales of deeds,
" Fair barter, through this desert, to green borders
" Where is Thy kingdom, and Thy city ;—here
" For ever stray I deeper into sands,
" Whereto is no green border seen, nor kingdom,
" Nor regal city, no, no kindly king !"
Nature is God's art. As the cunning artist
Spreads all the golden veins of his deep heart
Open in books, in music, or in pigments,
Wide to our hands, and bids us 'rich ourselves,
Sate ourselves with red ore, and call our sons,
Friends, least acquaintances, to delve for more,
And, scarcely labouring, to grow in wealth
Immeasurably precious, wealth of the soul,
Noble emotions stirred by noble art
(Wealth far above the hoards that earth corrupts,
Prey to the thief, and rust, and moth), and sole
Of all possessions that the spirit takes
Over the threshold of the robbing grave ;
True wealth, of the heart made godlike by great love—
So, but with greater art, God made this world,
Artist in every touch of the true hand ;
Not mere mechanical of added numbers,

Fitter of calculables to calculables,
That man recalculates and adds again,
Thinking himself to build the world anew.
God is a spirit, dwelling in our spirits,
Tuning our spirits unto fair emotion,
That is the soul's reunion unto God.
(*Pointing to the scene*:) This is His own immediate handiwork,
His Nature, prime in loveliness, and prime
To stir our spirits unto noble music,
Sweet songs of praise, high pæans of glad love,
Of trust that shall survive all blows and droop not—
Trust, love, praise, joy; high rhythms of choric song,
And softly brooding notes of the lone spirit,
Low as the cushat dove's 'mid hiding trees,
That listens to her own slow melody.
Man is through Nature privileged to share
The stirrings of the very heart of God.

THEODORE.

Privileged indeed!
For whether God smile in his fields or no,
And whether God frown in his showers or no,
Both fields and showers are His own handiwork,

And being his handiwork are beautiful.
Yea, we abide 'mid beauty. As the new wife,
Stirring with child beneath her loosened girdle,
Gazes at lovely statuary, to form
By meditation the unmoulded limbs
To equal loveliness; so may we well
Open all avenues of all our senses
And draw Heaven's beauty in to mould the soul.
Not without purpose, surely, were we set
Amid these lovelinesses.

DIONE.

Lo, the signs
Of evening are approaching! I drive you like
Slow-footed cattle, that would pause and browse
On every tuft or flower beside the road,
Or ruminate the undigested meal,
Save for my foresight, who with switch in hand
And shrill cries urge you to true pasturage.
Dear fathers both, the noon now draws apace
To its delightful close.

THEODORE.

'Tis true, dear sir,

'Tis true. We should be moving. [*They start.*

DIONE.

Go you ahead,
While I, your herd-maid, pause from urging you,
And sit and take a little teasing stone
Out of my shoe! Go you ahead! I trust you.

[CHIEF PRIEST *and* THEODORE *go out over the bridge.*

DIONE (*sings, as she takes off her shoe*).

O maiden breast, lie still nor heave
With love tumultuous, liker fear;
With love like fear, in gusty sighs,
The pelting blasts of riven skies,
When low-swooped storms their summits leave;
Till after skies be clear—shine clear!

O maiden heart, what deep serene
Shall rock thy spirit's floating oars,
What lofty arc of radiant air,
More high than pinioned eagles dare,
Shall isolate the blissful scene,
When love has left the wave-swept shores!

[*Towards the close of the song* STEPHAN *and* EIRENE *enter* (*on the right*), *and at the same time* DIONE *goes slowly out over the bridge. She kisses her hand towards them.*

EIRENE (*calls*).

Dionè! Dionè!

STEPHAN.

She too has gone. All things
Flee us, Eirenè.

EIRENE.

Ah, no! that cannot be!
Why should you say it?

[*She gazes at him, and then looks down.*

Flee? Oh, no! Now see!
If we sit here, very, oh, very still,
The forest squirrels will descend their trees,
And move about our feet in sport, quite close
And sweetly free from fear.

[*She sits down on the bank* (*on the right*).

I have often tried
To lure the pretty creatures to my hand
By sheer will-power, forcing my soul on theirs,
My wishes on their small resisting minds,
And all my message to them full of love
And fair assurances of gentleness.

[STEPHAN *sits down.*

But though they come half-way, the second half,
Into my very hand, is so much farther
Than all the rest of widest distances!
So near, so near! their dear bright eyes alert
With curiosity, ready to take
Immediate scampering fright; their soft round limbs
Tense for a twist to whisk them safe away.
And all the while they do, I know, half laugh
At such gay sport, so little dangerous—
For they must hear what my heart cries through silence,
"I would not hurt you, loves, for all the world!"—
But you must be still.

STEPHAN.

If I drop my voice
Almost into a whisper, will that do,
Eirenè? Thus: "Eirenè!" Can your squîrrels
Take even the least offence at such a name
So softly told?—Do I not tell you something,
In whispering so your name! Oh, answer me!

EIRENE.

You tell me that my name is thus—"Eirenè."
And very fair my name sounds, spoken so.

STEPHAN.

And do I ask you nothing, fairest, too,
When thus I whisper to you your own name?

EIRENE.

How do you whisper it?

STEPHAN.

Eirenè! Eirenè!

[*Enter* DOROTHEA *and* LAODAMAS *returning across the bridge.*

LAODAMAS.

Eirenè! Eirenè!

CHORUS OF CHILDREN (*unseen, from a distance*).

Eirenè ! Oh, Eirenè !

STEPHAN.

So all the world re-echoes my loud heart.

LAODAMAS.

Hark, Eirenè ! They have taught me a new song,
Whilst we were sitting down there in the meadows,
By the river-side, peeping over grasses
And butter-cups, up to my very eyes.
Listen !

(*Sings :*)

A king there was—

(*Speaks, pointing to* STEPHAN :)

But who is he ? What does he want ?

DOROTHEA (*seizing the child's hand*).

For shame, for shame, to point !

LAODAMAS.

But I *mean* him.

STEPHAN (*laughing*).

I want, my boy, the best thing in the world.

LAODAMAS.

And what is that?

STEPHAN.

Now sing us your gay song,
And I may tell you afterwards what is
The best thing in the world—if ever I win it.

EIRENE.

Sing, dear!

DOROTHEA.

Sing, dear!

LAODAMAS.

(*Sings:*)

A king there was, whose city slept
'Neath sloping Indian mountains,
And by its quays a river swept,
From distant snow-cave fountains.

From floating ships far folk debarked,
Sweet piles of spice unlading
And bales of silk-stuffs strangely marked,
Arm-deep in water wading.

And up the steps with bending knees
They bore their loads, and jested
In many tongues along the quays;
And laid them down and rested;

Then wondering gazed, where palace-lined
The city's wharfs extended,
And high upon the slope behind,
Up vista'd streets ne'er ended.

But most they wondered at the tide
Of stately people, thronging,
From morn till eve, the portals wide
To God's great Shrine belonging.

A king there was; he reigns no more;
Whose realm long since was humbled,
Whose quays have slipping plashed from shore,
Whose walls have sunk and crumbled.

A king there was; his city sleeps
'Neath changeless Indian mountains.
No man haunts there. The river sweeps
Past from its icy fountains.

(*Speaks:*)

Now tell me.

STEPHAN.

Only Eirenè knows, dear child.
I must ask her, and then I may tell you.

LAODAMAS (*running to the bridge*).

Oh, hark! Here come the sweet children once more.
They have been resting there. Now all are rising.

CHORUS OF CHILDREN (*sings*).

[*They enter, after one verse, returning over the bridge.*

Evening approaches. On white sandalled feet,
From palace-rooms deep-hidden,
She comes, by wont, the solemn night to greet,
Our lady, softly bidden—

By breezes calm, that stream with passing day,
Noon's sultry vapours lifting,
That heavy round her shuttered palace lay,
Now heavenward slowly drifting;

By bird-sung notes that plaintive turn and fail,
That flowed in joy unbroken;
By owlet's laugh; by the cicáda's wail,
Of falling night the token;

By jackal's yelp, and yelping far reply
From dim form swiftly slinking;
By village dogs, with sudden clamorous cry
To surly stillness sinking.

Evening approaches. Lo, her silver star
Shines from her forehead braided,
Whose beauty age-long sorrows cannot mar,
Whose eyes tears leave unfaded.

Lonely she moves, down her long corridors,
Wide Eastern prospects viewing,
And on her sunken altar-fires she pours
Fresh spice, the flame renewing.

And still upon the altar-steps she stands
'Mid shades of night descending;
And still her eyes are fixed, and still her hands
Are clasped in woe unending.

(THE CHORUS OF CHILDREN *passes out (to the left), and as the song ends the last children leave.*

DOROTHEA.

Come, dear child, it is time. Farewell, sweet souls!

(*To self*:) Earth has no love for me. Heaven be my love!

[DOROTHEA *goes out* (*to the left*), *leading* LAODAMAS.

STEPHAN.

You have not answered me, Eirenè, yet.

EIRENE.

What did you ask that is not answered yet?

STEPHAN.

That which I asked you when I whispered to you
Your own name, thus: "Eirenè, O Eirenè!"

EIRENE.

Ah, I remember now you asked me so. (*Sighs.*)
I do remember now; and shall remember
Always.

STEPHAN.

And you forgot?

EIRENE.

No, not forgot!

STEPHAN.

Then you remembered?

EIRENE.

I remembered well.

STEPHAN.

Answer me then, Eirenè; answer me,
Lest I should die!

[*They kiss.*

EIRENE.

Thou know'st now, dost thou not?

STEPHAN.

I know, I know! Ah, have I entered heaven?
O heaven on earth, thou liest in the bounds,
The limits circumscribed, of one dear form.
Thy narrow portals are her arching lips,
And thus I enter thee, O heaven on earth!

[*They kiss.*

Thus, thus, I enter. And within I find
All fairest sights before my healèd mind.
And she, of all the sights of heaven most fair,
Meets me and guides, at sail o'er glowing lands
(O earthly heaven, O empire unconfined!)
From height to height, on easy stirring wings:
O endless heaven, in one dear maiden's soul!

EIRENE.

I fain would tell thee how I love thee, love.

Art thou content with inarticulate
Kisses? Art thou content; or wilt thou hear
Whilst I the passion of a nightingale
Pour forth to thee, through unmelodious words—
A midnight weltering ocean-flood of love,
Restlessly surging to the summer moon?
Which aching passion, if she feels not now,
The bird felt long ago in woman's breast.
Nor is such love forgotten. Think you the bird
Forgets in any part that old-time love?
Is not her heart still tremulously full?
She loves.

STEPHAN.

Sing, O my nightingale! and I
Will tell thee if the heart be full, or no.
Sing! Every note I'll judge, each delicate trill.
Sing, to the most exacting judge of all,
True Love itself, that sits as judge in me!

[*Enter a* MAIDEN *of the* WOMEN'S CHORUS *and a* HUNTER *of the* MEN'S CHORUS, *returning over the bridge.*

MAIDEN.

For ever and for ever, my Sebastian ?
For ever, and for ever, and for ever ?
Thou'lt not desert me for a prettier face,
As mine is prettier now than Berenicè's ?
Promise, before I give myself to thee !

HUNTER.

Yes, yes ! I promise what you will, my rose.

MAIDEN.

" For ever and for ever ! " Say it now !
But, there ! you vowed the same to Berenicè
(Did you not, sweet Sebastian ?—ah, you did !),
And broke your vows to her, and maids before her
So many maids ! what am I but one more ?

HUNTER.

Nay, nay, sweet rose ! All that you say is true
In word, yet in the spirit verily false.
Never, I vow, oh, never have I met
A maid for whom I passioned as for you.
Could you but see my heart ! It is your shrine.
Gaze in my eyes ! They mirror only you.

MAIDEN (*gazing*).

Ah, yes, they mirror me, they mirror me !
And never have I looked so beautiful
Before ; and never gazed in glass so fair
Before—save haply in the river-mirror
There in the bended stream—

HUNTER.

Where the maids bathe ?

MAIDEN.

I said not that.

HUNTER.

Sweet rose ! Bathe in my eyes !
They mirror you more true than smoothest stream,
Though shaken by a thousand waves of love.

[*They embrace.*

MAIDEN.

But wilt thou vow to me true love, belovèd ?
Even though thou break'st them, swear all vows to me !
I will believe them—till the end shall come.

[*They go out (to the left). Enter, mingled, the* CHORUSES OF MEN *and* WOMEN *returning, singing.*

SONG.

WOMEN. *O silver moon* ! MEN. *O silver moon* !
WOMEN. *Slow rising over darkling trees ;*
Teach me my own true love to please !
O silver moon ! MEN AND WOMEN. *O silver moon* !

MEN. *O burning star* ! WOMEN. *O burning star* !
MEN. *The sign of Love in nightly skies !*
Thy worshippers alone are wise.
O burning star ! MEN AND WOMEN. *O burning star* !

WOMEN. *O silent paths* ! MEN. *O silent paths* !
WOMEN. *Where lovers most frequent at eve ;*
Whose tangled ways their steps deceive.
O silent paths ! MEN AND WOMEN. *O silent paths* !

MEN. *O kindly skies* ! WOMEN. *O kindly skies* !
MEN. *Opening the highest heavens by night ;*
Ah, snatch us up to their delight !
O kindly skies ! MEN AND WOMEN. *O kindly skies* !

[*The* CHORUSES *sing* [illegible] *slowly out* (*to the*

end of the song all have left except two couples.

1ST MAID.

Give you good evening, Eirenè !

2ND MAID.

Give you good evening, Eirenè!

EIRENE.

Good evening, maidens, to you both !

1ST MAID.

It's growing chilly o' nights. One needs more arms
Than nature gifts one with, to keep one warm.

HUNTERS.

Ha, ha ! Ha, ha !

1ST MAID.

She thought we did not see
Where his hand was.

HUNTERS.

Ha, ha ! Ha, ha ! Ha, ha !

[*The* TWO COUPLES *go out.*

EIRENE.

We, too, should go. Yet give them time to draw

Far, far ahead. They rend his delicate fans,
They dabble their fingers with his painted plumes,
And wonder then that poor Love cannot fly—
Poor Love, poor worm, confined to earth again!
A shadow seems to have fallen upon the world.

STEPHAN.

The evening comes apace over the land,
Black-winged; and, wafting the chilled air downward,
It shakes a cold gust upon us, and pursues
Its way, now beyond.

EIRENE.

(*She trembles.*) I shuddered. Is it
Of evil omen?—If aught of ill should come
Upon our love Ah, nothing evil yet
Can come upon our love, dear love. No, no!
Love is too holy for the bolts of heaven
To strike so soon. For love is holy?

STEPHAN.

Holy
Even to the end, though heaven may strike it down!
Lo, here I stand and call aloud to heaven,
Crying "High Heavens, be witness of my love!

"Write in your books, celestial chancelry—
"Inscribe me there true lover unto death;
"Write me indelibly in gold, or black,
"Purple the pictured page with storied fate,
"Or mar it with dropped tears and funeral band—
"Yet write me lover, unto furthest time,
"When latest angels turn the record o'er!"

EIRENE.

Belov'd!

STEPHAN.

And should far Heaven, here where I cry, stoop down,
Wrap me in flames, and cast my ashes out
Upon the wind, like dust the eddying breeze
Scoops up from the high-road and casts abroad
In random handfuls, upon wide bordering fields,
Yet wouldst thou not, true love, deny thy love,
Nor weep "I sinned! I sinned, Lord, unaware,
"And do repent an unblessed act, and mourn
"My error, and have swept my heart"—not thus
Wouldst thou deny me?

EIRENE.

Never! never!

STEPHAN.

I knew.—
Heaven not so, with fortune or misfortune,
Approves or disapproves our earthly deeds.
High Heaven's divinity doth buoy us round,
In which the world and all things over it,
And all below, float as upon a sea ;
Whose peace unfathomed, whose slow proceeding streams,
Winding to Fate, our lives alone disturb,
Shallowly skimming each his narrow circle.
So drift we to the ultimate goal of Time.
Yet by the magnet of the soul we sway
To the immediate purposes of Heaven.
Though all the miseries that encumbered Job
Lie on the neck and pustuled skin of one
Whom sorrow and sickness goad through dust and mire,
'Tis law, not Heaven, that scars the sorry body,
'Tis chance, not God, that loads the broken form—
Heaven communes low with his unwounded soul.
Therefore, what evils may descend on us
(If fate and chance have evil store for us)
Take not as judgments, love, upon our pas[illegible]

Which is all good, all pure, all joyous too.
Why should we fear so soon, why fear so soon?

EIRENE.

Love seems compact of fears.

STEPHAN.

Compact of joy.

EIRENE.

Of joys, of fears, commingled bitter-sweet.

STEPHAN.

Oh, let the sweet prevail! [*They kiss.*

EIRENE.

Ah, promise me
Thou ne'er wilt leave me?

STEPHAN.

Never, until death!

EIRENE.

Nay, not in death even! Life is not enough!
Ev'n after death! Promise, nay, promise me!

STEPHAN.

I promise, love. I will abide with thee,
Even aiding, after death. And thou?

EIRENE.

Heaven could
Not hold my spirit from thee: my soul is thine.
Nor shalt thou go! Though Fate should tear thy body
Out of my widowed arms, and leave me sobbing
My life out to the dark blank waste of night,
My yearning should regather thee from the stars!

[*Enter* CHIEF PRIEST, THEODORE, *and* DIONE, *over the bridge. The* CHIEF PRIEST *advances silently; the others stand.*

STEPHAN.

Till death! [*They kiss.*

EIRENE.

And after death!

STEPHAN.

And after death,
Belovèd!

[*The* CHIEF PRIEST *stands over the pair, gazing.*

EIRENE (*looking up*).

O love, not death alone impends.

CURTAIN.

ACT III.

SCENE: *the side-chapel of the Great Temple, as in Act I.* TIME: *early morning.*

[THREE CITIZENS *discovered*; *a* PROCESSION OF PRIESTS *crosses towards the Choir, in silence*; THEODORE, ALEXIS, *and lastly the* CHIEF PRIEST *follow. Other citizens pass from time to time.*

1ST CITIZEN.

It is the opening service of the day;
A brief half hour for silent contemplation.
Mum is the word, and pray for your own self,
Learning original eloquence thereby.
No priest to pop appropriate sentiments,
All ginger-hot, upon the tongue for you.

Warm your own thoughts here; hatch, and fledge, and fly.
That's the Chief Priest, a most austere old man.

[*The* PROCESSION OF PRIESTS *goes out. A* PROCESSION OF TEMPLE-WOMEN *enters and passes towards the Choir, silently;* DOROTHEA *follows at a short distance.*

These are the celibate Temple-women, here,
Nuns vowed to the rule of Holy Charity.
Heaven bless them! Reverently I say the word.
Good works are always needed. Here's a fountain
Of charity that never has run dry.

DOROTHEA (*to self*).

Heaven's love is best. I will not linger now.
Earth has no love that can with Heaven's compare.
Take me, O Church! I will not linger more.

[DOROTHEA *goes out after the* TEMPLE-WOMEN.

1ST CITIZEN.

Oh, ay, oh, ay! I do believe you, neighbour,
Never was such a land as ours before!
No patriotic lover of his countr-

Found ever yet disfavour in my eyes
—Except these foreigners, of course ; except
These strange barbarians that an ill chance sends
Once in a score of years or so, ship-wrecked
And beggared, to our lovely shores, to grudge
All that they see, and take one half away,
And prate about their own misguided lands.
Except these foreigners, I love all patriots.

2ND CITIZEN.

Be you more liberal, neighbour, to these waifs !
I have seen them on their distant native shores,
And though I do not love them, here or there,
We owe them debts, neighbour, we owe them debts.

1ST CITIZEN.

Debts, debts ?

2ND CITIZEN.

Ay, debts ; such debts as every nation
Owes to each other race that tramps through time.
Debts, debts, vast debts, neighbour ! Man cannot serve
Himself only. Grasping his true advantage
He thrusts rich treasure into others' hands :
That found for one is found for all ; and good,
True good, by all is inexhaustible.

1ST CITIZEN.

Well, well, in a large sense, man, you are right:
Survey the rest of the world—we owe it much.
It owes us more; or would so owe, were it
Not cursed in temper, or oblique in mind.
Tut, tut! Tut, tut! What gifts compared with ours?
Look at our freedom! Here every man has weight
According to his tangible worth to the state.

3RD CITIZEN.

Look at our ease! What public wealth in lands,
That other nations squander on their lords!
Our working men untaxed, except of strength,
That grows the more for what is taken from it;
And each as closely wove by his own interests,
As is his master, to the daily task!

1ST CITIZEN,

Ay, ease; yet never luxury! Our men
—Ah, well, I'm old, a pursy citizen,
Far past my prime of strength (as you—you too);
Yet we could barricade, old friends, some gap,
Some crevice in this dear land's last defence,

Not all inadequately, friends, not all
Unskilled, not all a matter of laughter to
Such foe as chanced, fat though we be and old.
And every corpulent oldster is as fit
As we to block up holes with his old dust ;
And every stripling of this land is oak,
Or supple ash and hard, to bar the way ;
And every man is iron, to beat upon
And bruise the striker's hand or shiver it,
So hard a blow, so maimed the bloody fist.
Ho, ho ! a land of men, a land of men, sirs !

2ND CITIZEN.

True, true ! I yield to none in love.

1ST CITIZEN.

And love
—Oh, other love, not your fine patriot's fervour,
But men's and women's love, and boys' and girls',
Such as we three have burned with (and still burn,
I do protest) ! What other land has found
So happy a way betwixt extremes of ill—
The barren cliffs of hatred, day and night

Gloomily spread against the searching feet,
Immovable against the cries of dulled despair;
The tempting slope opposed, the slipping shale,
Gemmed over with the flower called light-o'-love,
Dragging the feet in terror to the edge,
Were the end comes swiftly, not of wailing famine.—
Here wends a couple. Lord love you, such was I.—
Well, sirs, this is our Temple. Follow, and wonder!

[*They go out.* STEPHAN *and* EIRENE *have just entered. They embrace silently.*

EIRENE.

Here first I saw you, love; and, if we part,
Here let us part, that this same place may hold
Within my memory all our tale of love,
From sweet beginning up to aching close;
So short to last, so sweet to feel, so hard
To lose—(*weeping*) ah me, so hard—too hard to lose,
Love, without tears!

STEPHAN.

Weep not, my

EIRENE.

I am of feeble heart; prone to despair. [*She weeps.*

STEPHAN.

Nay, love! Weep not! The fight is not yet lost
Nor won. Dear maid, give me, not tears, but smiles,
To urge thy warrior on!

EIRENE.

Ah! I must smile
Only to hear thy tender voice, and look
Into thine eyes—so clear, and brave, and true.
Oh, look not so on any other woman!
Ah me! Yet here, I think, I oft shall come
And kneel and pray for you, not far from me
(Not far in body, very far in mind),
Chanting austerely in the shadowy choir,
While I involve your rapt soul in a cloud
Of passionate love and longing. Will you feel it?
Ah, no! but you will sing of heavenly things,
And I, I shall pray here, where love began
For me, and rounded off to earliest close.
Here is my shrine of love. Here bury me,
When you shall pass and find me, kneeling, dead

STEPHAN.

Nay, sweet! thine, haply; not of my love the close!
Let hap what may, renounce me as thou wilt,
I am thy lover, while the world shall roll.

EIRENE.

Nay, I renounce thee not. Thou passest from me,
Out of my arms, out of the warmth of life,
Where the sun lies, in open mead and vale,
Into the chilly shadow of the forest,
Where, deeply hid, our joys long lost still range.

STEPHAN.

Nay, love! I am in shadow—the shadow of trouble,
That travels over every sun-steeped mead,
Swiftly or slow, staining the hours, or moments,
With change and chill (a cloud that banks the sky,
Heavily building up black parapets,
Whence woe may tyrannise the low wide land;
Or films that scarcely veil the eyes of Heaven
Before the breezes kiss the drops away,
Laughing to see the blue shine clear again)—

In such a shadow am I, the shadow of trouble,
Not in that forest of oblivion, chill
With dank primæval darkness and sad boughs
Dripping in melancholy and slow decay.
Why should we fear?

EIRENE.

Thy father! Stephan, Stephan!
His features, terrible with broken hopes,
With high strange majesty, and that dread fire,
Belched for one moment, uncontrollably,
Forth from the blazing caverns of his scorn,
Haunt me by sunny day and by black night,
And all my hopes cower and flee before him.

STEPHAN.

No, no! not thus, he is not thus, Eirenè!

EIRENE.

He is not man; he is not of our race,
But some gigantic soul astray from heaven,
That lives and feels as God, and scorns, amazed,
And justly scorns, such trivial souls as mine.
I fear him.

STEPHAN.

Yet thou shalt love him, as I love.
Beneath his cold majestic mien there throbs
Heart tenderer than the wont of men. Love is
His greatness: greatness is all love. His passion,
Turned unto Heaven, streams upward in high flame,
Fiercely and wild before the eyes of men;
But, worldward turned, is lambent sun and rain,
Musical breezes, and the earth's content.
Yea, thou shalt love him; and his love shall meet
Thine open-armed, if thine but greet him. Come,
We two will throw ourselves before his feet,
And beg his great heart to stoop down to us,
And fold us warm in pity and forgiveness.
Lo, he has nothing said, nothing forbidden,
Denounced no project of our wedded love.
He would not listen when I cried his name;
Yet now he will, when thought is calm. He would
Not speak, with tongue of anger, then. But now—

EIRENE.

Ah, what am I, who lead you from your vows,

Those vows that he believes are gates of heaven!

STEPHAN.

Vows not irrevocable. They ope and free
The soul that strains against the pressing gyves.
Nay, not the vows, which are but wishes breathed
With tenderness and solemnly to heaven;
That prop the soul walking in feebleness
On lonely paths, beset with wild desire—
Not any vows divide our sacred love.
Not any vows, not any rule, nor law—
His word alone, can end our hope, our bliss.
For even a promise only part-implied
To him, Eirenè, were inviolable?

[*She whispers.*

I knew, I knew!
Yet he shall give my ungiven promise back.

[*They sit down. Music is heard preluding.*

His word alone can end our hope, our bliss—
Yet not his word, no word of earth or heaven,
Can end this love, my Peace, can end this love.

CHORAL SONG (*sung by unseen choir*).

O Joy of earth, that passest swift away,
Lure not away with thee my heart's content !
Nor, if thou fain wilt go, leave wild regret ;
That rends the soul, as by a tempest torn,
And casts the mind broken from off its throne,
Filling the vault of night with cries of woe !
But rather go as friend that moves before,
An elder loved, a brother, comrade, guide,
Who stays and stoops, and moulds to grace our form ;
Leading the mind aloft to wider skies,
To solemn rest and quietude the soul ;
Whom Heaven awhile has lent, but spares no more !
O Joy of earth, so swift to pass away,
O dear delight, swift come, and soon withdrawn,
Ere they wide wings be spread, point me thy starry home !

[*During the closing verses the* PROCESSION OF PRIESTS *recrosses in silence* ; THEODORE *and* ALEXIS *follow. They pass out.*

EIRENE.

Dost thou, love, hope ?

STEPHAN.

Ay, love, I hope. [*He embraces her.*

EIRENE.

I too
Draw strength from thee, drink of thy hope, draw thirsty
Draughts from thy steam, O brimming flood and broad!
Without thee were my life arid as sand,
Pale as the barren ridge, that steams and shakes
Fire from its jaws, back at the flaming sun;
That knows no pleasant shade of sheltering trees,
Nor any turf, nor face of friendly flowers,
Which are life's many-coloured varied joys.
Verily art thou unto me, O love,
As a broad river unto neighbouring meadows.
Through thee I bring forth herbs and blossomy flowers,
Content and joy, that without thee must fail.
He shall forgive me! He shall bless our love,
The union of the stream (thou mirror of heaven,
In whom the face of highest Heaven is seen,
By radiant day, by brooding starrèd night!)
And my fond earth, whose beauties, drawn from thee,
Rest only in thy bosom perfectly.

STEPHAN (*embracing her*).

Rest there, belovèd ! Here will we stay until
He passes by. Here he must come. The time
Is nigh when he returns. Thou shalt entreat him—

[*The* CHIEF PRIEST *enters slowly, in deep thought.*

See ! He is here. Arouse, true heart !

EIRENE.

Sayst thou
I must entreat him ? Ah, dear love, for thee
Will I dare anything ! I will obey.
Nod but thy head, whisper thy wish by signs,
Nay, even think a wish and let its spirit
Pass silent and remote through thy deep eyes,
And I shall see its still gaze turn on me,
And know, and do thy will ! In thee alone,
Belov'd, I trust—a trust all questionless
As child-love for the father, who stoops low
And whispers Dare ! and strides—anywhere on—
The child-soul knows not where, nor cares, if that
The hand still press, the voice be heard—whose touch,
Whose tones, fill the child-heart to break with daring.

Bid me, and I will try! What fear, though he
Should flash on me his scorn? Lo! I shall laugh,
Knowing I am invulnerable through love.

STEPHAN.

Nay, love, I am the forefront of our battle,
And, with Heaven's help, shall fight before thee still,
Through all our years of mortal wandering!
Kneel here and pray for me with up-raised hands!
Heaven is drawn down to us more oft by prayer,
Suffusing our far spirit with Its calm,
Its glad content, Its lightness on the way,
Than they believe, whose faith is dead to passion,
Plodding, low bowed, with hearts cut off from joy.
Pray for me here, belov'd, with up-raised hands,
While I shall strive, even till the setting sun.

[EIRENE *kneels in the side-chapel.*

(*To* CHIEF PRIEST:) Father!

CHIEF PRIEST (*starting*).

'Tis thou, my son? Where is she, Stephan?
The fair bright soul, the tender maiden face?
Where is the siren that would twine her arms

Round you, unskilled and youthful mariner,
Leaning so madly from the circling boat—
Clasping, poor souls, at one another, yearning,
Youth after siren, fairy maiden too
After the loveliest form of mortal youth
That ever chance sucked to that eddying pool ?

STEPHAN.

Nay, father, nay ! She brings me peace—her name.

CHIEF PRIEST.

Peace ! Ay, the peace of the dead soul ! So locked,
Arms twined in arms, mouth moulded soft to mouth,
So will she sink you, man and maid involved,
Giddily turning in the funnelled wave,
Down to the chasms where drownèd souls are strewn.

STEPHAN.

She is an angel sent from heaven. O sir,
In your austerity you stand aloof
Too far, believe me, from the world of men
And women.

CHIEF PRIEST.

The world is habitat for the soul,
Wherein the soul may dwell and slow assume

Stature divine, and fit itself for heaven.
The world is the possession of the soul,
Not the interitance of the lower brood,
The shames of whose lewd nakedness you cover
With names of man and woman, broidery
Stiff with the gold the soul has wrought thereon.
Nay, Stephan, to the soul is empire given,
Heaven's high vice-gerent over crowded lands.
Take thou the sceptre, Stephan, and the crown!
Thy choice is now. Choose with no ignorant hand!

STEPHAN.

Yours, father, be the choice, to bind my actions.
Choose, sir, deliberately, for me. And I,
I so will act, throughout your life, and mine.
My acts are yours, to mould as mould you will:
My soul, O father, and my intimate mind,
That you have guided till these latter days,
These, all unruly, will no longer move
But as my other soul, my love, shall stir,—
Ah, father, but it grieves my earlier love,
My filial love for you, O great and good,
That here my two loves part and drag two ways!
Yet am I fashioned so that the new love

Draws me more strongly, and I follow, follow.
Nay, sir, nay, sir, love is not what you deem.
You offer me the earth—the sceptre and
The crown of Heaven's vice-gerent here; but she
Offers the golden keys of Heaven itself.
Her soul is heaven; such part of heaven as earth,
Cramped, can contain; and I may enter there.

[*The* CHIEF PRIEST *goes out*, STEPHAN *following*; EIRENE *remains kneeling.*

CHORAL SONG (*sung by unseen choir*).

The world is spread, a builded screen,
Set up our souls and Heaven between;
That bars our sight, our vision stays—
Who else on Heaven itself would gaze!

How near the world before us lies,
The veil how close, to touch the eyes,
So close our steps to heavenly ground!
Such narrow circuit girds us round!

We walk for ever near to God;
No step from Him apart is trod!
Then walk as if no earthly screen
Were spread thy soul and God

For Heaven has set thee here a space
Of years to spend, of griefs to face,
To dare the tests of joy and pain—
And then the gates of Heaven to gain !

Then Heaven in rapture loud shall cry
" Though Earth be low, though God be high,
A Godlike soul in earthly prison
Has lain, and, lo, again is risen !

" The ages of its growth are told,
Nor Earth can now such spirit hold,
Nor heaven from Heaven be severed still.
Oh, enter Heaven, its joy to fill ! "

So, free thy heart from this the world,
Nor sorrow-fraught, nor passion-whirled,
That God in thee and God above
May meet, and see, and know, and love !

EIRENE (*to self, kneeling*).

Oh, bring me calm, dear Lord ! Descend upon
The rain-dimmed waters of my soul, that seethe,
Dull-black and sullen, flecked with rising foam,
Where spreads the welter of the storm. Oh, come !

Come, with Thy peace, O Lord ! Thy feet shall tread
A pathway of stilled waters through these waves !
Come, with Thy peace ; and Thy grave eyes, and brows
Be bright upon my sea as harvest moon
O'er summer's calm ! Bring me Thy peace, O Lord !

[*The* TEMPLE-WOMEN *return in procession two by two, the last pair being the* PRIORESS *and the youngest* NUN. *After them follows* DOROTHEA.

Grant me to reach the peace of the pure in spirit,
That is a land-locked water, closed in from storm !

PRIORESS (*to* NUN).

See, she still follows us. Who is the maid ?

DOROTHEA (*to* PRIORESS).

Mother, give ear to me ; hear my request !

PRIORESS.

Say on, my daughter, for I harken to you.

DROTHEA.

I fain would quit the world, O holy mother !

I fain would leave the world and flee to you!
Grant me your succour, Mother; pour on me
The dewy vials of the love of heaven,
Drawn from the conduits of the running stream,
The flowing fountains, in your silent courts!
For here I faint and wither in the blaze,
And am bespotted with the dust that falls.

PRIORESS.

Come not if you but seek self-righteousness,
But to be lily-garbed in white and green,
Dust-pure and fragrant of slope summer woods,
The mossy fern, aud silent afternoon!
Here do we labour, and in labour find
Rest, not in unsoiled hands aud circling songs.

NUN.

Nay, madam—oh, forgive me!—but the maid
Is known to me as spiritually inclined.
Ah, your own kindly-keen eyes smile. You know.

TEMPLE-WOMEN.

The maid is lovely as the angels are.

DOROTHEA.

Dear Mother, take me! Try me, test me, prove!

I will not shrink from labour in the world.
Oh, grant my boon, the succour of your love,
The strength of these to prop me lest I fall,
The sense of guidance and a common goal,
The help of forms, the aid of comradeship,
The vigour of the ordered rank and tread:
Oh, grant me these! Here in the world, alone,
I stagger in the path, and doubt the road,
I stumble and I waver, and sit me down
Often upon the wayside here to weep.
The kingdom that I travel to is far—
So far the city that I fain would reach!
Make me but lowliest of your company,
Grant me to serve you, let me walk with you!

PRIORESS.

Come, well-belovèd! Thou shalt serve with these,
That each is servant to all others. Come!

TEMPLE-WOMEN.

Come, well-belovèd! Serving, serve with us.

[*The* PRIORESS, *the* NUN[illegible]
DOROTHEA *go out*

by the TEMPLE-WOMEN.

EIRENE (*to self, kneeling*).

Ah, well-loved sister, " well-belovèd " ! So,
In that fair name, in thy sweet fellowship
With saints, hast thou found peace. " Come, well-belovèd ! "—
O truly lovèd, give me too that call !
So bid me come ! For in thy fellowship
(More high than all the company of saints,
Crowding upon the stairways up to heaven)
I too shall find my peace. I know nor peace
Nor any storm, wherein thou dost not enter,
My peace, my storm, my joy, and poignant sorrow !
Oh, mingled love, oh, glad anxiety !
My soul without thee were a stagnant pool :
Thy visiting feet make widening arcs of pain,
But as they trouble bring miraculous life.

[*Enter* DIONE, THEODORE *and* ALEXIS.

DIONE (*to* THEODORE).

I saw him pleading with the old man there ;
And [illegible] here, breathing out her soul
[illegible]hey, then, fight their fight

Without ally? Is, then, our sympathy
With him, or them—their tender lovely youth
(Turning with all sweet lovable things to love,
And never lovelier unto lovelier),
Or with this terrible saint, this fierce old man?—
Whose heart of rock hides yet a gushing stream,
The living fountain of clear love, to him
That smites upon it rightly with the rod.
I have no mastery over that high mind;
Nor skill, nor hand, nor valour, for the blow.

THEODORE.

Ah, daughter, blame me not! The long obedience
That I have yielded to his greater mind,
His soaring soul, his wide authority—
My long and loyal and ungrudging service—
This is not swept like some frail web away
At the first act of his that I dare question.
Nor dare I more than question this, Dionè.
Nay, in his wisdom let him judge this too!

DIONE (*to* ALEXIS).

And you, Alexis? No, I cry no blame,
That you should look upon the cost of war

Before you face it; and this grim old saint
Is terrible in arms. Yet, see, for love—
My love (that tender is to all young love,
And tender most to theirs, that I have fostered)—
For my love (if 'tis sweet enough to claim
Some deed of arms from him who has it all),
Be comrade to this youth that fights alone!

ALEXIS.

So, love! I go. Your grim old saint will fall
Gladly on me, and leave your youth alone;
For very cautiously he fights with him,
Lest he should wound what he most closely loves—
And who besides thrusts stronger lance than I,
A finer man, and wields a better sword
(I take no shame to say it, who am no coward).
But me he will not spare, and when he flings
Me wounded back, see you that my wounds heal.
Lo, here he comes. Fall I upon his flank
Out of an ambush?—What, they fight no more?

[*Enter* CHIEF PRIEST *and* STEPHAN.

See, visors up! and on his face no frown
But that of thought!

CHIEF PRIEST (*to* STEPHAN).

Then, bring her to me, Stephan.

[STEPHAN *strides to where* EIRENE *is kneeling; she rises as she sees him, and holds out her hands tentatively.*

EIRENE (*softly*).

Stephan!

STEPHAN.

Come, O my love! He bids you come.

EIRENE.

Come—to—him—here—now? Ah, I cannot stand!
Stephan!

[STEPHAN *supports and leads her.*

Does he forgive me? Tell me quickly!
Your tender smile says Yes; oh, say it not
If—

STEPHAN (*softly*).

He forgives us. Come to him, my own.
(*To* CHIEF PRIEST:) I do beseech you, father, to admit
Her straightway in your heart, even as a daughter,
For she will render you a daughter's love from now,

And love, so given, takes in the end, or soon
Or late, its full return, nor knows denial.

CHIEF PRIEST (*taking her hand and gazing at her*).

Thou art fair, my child; fairer than any woman
These eyes have looked on, saving one (save one,
In olden years)—his mother. Good art thou too,
I doubt not, being fair, ay, very fair;
As she was good, who was more fair than all
My agèd eyes have seen in this broad world.
I am an old man, and a lonely man;
Perchance am not so wise as I have dreamed—
Perchance not very wise at all. Who knows?
Who knows?—when all a builded city of thought
Totters and sways, and stoops unto the ground,
But at one bolt from such unconscious eyes—
Whose power I had forgot, these many years.
Out of the plunging chariots of heaven
An angel, standing, speeds a golden car
Down the bright beam-way of such gentle eyes,
And blows a trump before the gates, and smiles,
And, lo, the gates are open the city taken.
See that the angel be of Heaven indeed!

EIRENE.

I have no words, my father, at command
To tell the love that cries and stumbles towards you.

[*They embrace.*

CHIEF PRIEST.

(*To* STEPHAN:) I have too long striven to rule your mind,
Out of old habitude and tender love.

STEPHAN.

Be still a father to your undutiful son!

CHIEF PRIEST.

Never undutiful! Not then, not now
The lust of power, the habitude of rule,
Still grow like creeping weed over the heart;
And my heart is too favourable a soil,
By very ardour of the sun that flames
Upon it, to the weed, whose tropic hues,
Ablaze, throw rapid tendrils o'er the soul
And smother leaf and tree.—(*To self*:) Have faith
The good
Shall dominate still the evil in the world,

And drive it as a herd of lowing cattle,
Hornèd and hoofed, a-patter on hard ground.
For mighty in the right to rise through all
The fluctuant atoms to the broad clear air—
Or so has been ; is still—unless we break
Back slowly into jarring life again,
And good subsides down the unfathomed main.
Comes, then, the patter of hoofs upon the ear—
And, lo, the hoofed and horned drive the soft-footed,
Satyrs agrin, on a reversèd road ?
Nay, good shall rule ! But I have ruled amiss.
Too eager I to twist a noble soul
Into a pattern that it grew not to.
(*To* STEPHAN :) Marriage, virginity, are of the soul
Rather than of the body. The body bound
Strict to my will, as you would let me bind it,
Would leave your soul still wedded to this soul,
Blended by soft affinities to your own.
(*To* EIRENE :) Take, then, his love !

[STEPHAN *and* EIRENE *kneel.*

Be unto him true wife ;
Be fruitful, multiply ! May Heaven above
Reap from this man and woman that true harvest,

Which earth bears scantily or plentifully
(For earth knows not, but He that tells the sheaves)—
The harvest of immortal souls.

[STEPHAN *and* EIRENE *rise, holding hands.*

Come, daughter!

[*The* CHIEF PRIEST *leads* EIRENE *by the hand. She still clasps* STEPHAN'S *hand and gazing into his eyes walks slowly. A* CHORAL SONG *begins as they move away.*

CHORAL SONG (*sung by unseen choir.*)

[*A fragrant smell of herbs and incense as from a sacrifice, pervades the Chapel.*

Nature's warmth, Earth's beauty mating,
Folds her round with hurtless flame;
Softly he, his love relating,
Nears her breast, where erst he came.

Of their endless love upspringing
All this store of wealth began,
Tended by the Months that, singing,
Sun and Earth in circle span.

Them in mystic arcs enfolding,
Choric Years of circling Time
Guard their loves, cold Age withholding
From the bowery nuptial clime.

There his warmth, her beauty mating,
Folds her round in hurtless flame,
Whilst he soft, his love relating,
Nears her breast, where erst he came.

[*As all go out the curtain falls, and the music dies away.*

END.

NOTE.

The Song on page 55 does not imply that there is no resistance to good, due to the free choice of mortals, nor that such resistance should not be checked and controlled. What each takes to be opposed to good let him fight. But the word "evil" suggests an activity and initiative and equality of power on the part of the opposition to good, which is here denied. Evil and Good are convenient terms for Mortal and Divine, all good actions, thoughts, and feelings being divine, and all "evil" ones mortal—not human, but of the perishable part of man.

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